

THE
DOCTRINE OF ATONEMENT

ILLUSTRATED AND DEFENDED,

IN

EIGHT SERMONS,

PREACHED BEFORE THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,

IN THE YEAR 1795,

AT THE

LECTURE FOUNDED BY

The late Rev. JOHN BAMPTON, M. A.

CANON OF SALISBURY.

By DANIEL VEYSIE, B.D.

FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE,

AND ONE OF HIS MAJESTY'S PREACHERS AT WHITEHALL,

OXFORD:

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M DCC XCV.

ILLUSTRATED AND DEFENDED

EIGHT SERMONS.

IMPRIMATUR.

JOHAN. WILLS,

VICE-CAN.

WADH. COLL.

20^{mo} die Junii, 1795.

The late Rev. JOHN BARRTON, M.A.

BY DANIEL V. V. V. V. B.D.

AND ONE OF THE MAJESTY'S SHIPS AT WILMINGTON.

OXFORD

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M Dec 20 1964

TO
THE RIGHT REVEREND
AND REVEREND
THE HEADS OF COLLEGES
IN THE
UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD,
THE
FOLLOWING SERMONS,
PREACHED BY THEIR APPOINTMENT,
ARE MOST RESPECTFULLY
INSCRIBED.

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EXTRACT

FROM THE

LAST WILL AND TESTAMENT

OF THE LATE

REV. JOHN BAMPTON,

CANON OF SALISBURY.

—“ I give and bequeath my Lands and
“ Estates to the Chancellor, Masters, and
“ Scholars of the University of Oxford for
“ ever, to have and to hold all and singular
“ the said Lands or Estates upon trust, and to
“ the intents and purposes hereinafter men-
“ tioned; that is to say, I will and appoint
“ that the Vice-Chancellor of the University
“ of Oxford for the time being shall take and
“ receive

“ receive all the rents, issues, and profits
 “ thereof, and (after all taxes, reparations
 “ and necessary deductions made) that he
 “ pay all the remainder to the endowment
 “ of eight Divinity Lecture Sermons, to be
 “ established for ever in the said Univer-
 “ sity, and to be performed in the manner
 “ following:

“ I direct and appoint, that, upon the first
 “ Tuesday in Easter Term, a Lecturer be
 “ yearly chosen by the Heads of Colleges
 “ only, and by no others, in the room ad-
 “ joining to the Printing-House, between
 “ the hours of ten in the morning and two
 “ in the afternoon, to preach eight Divinity
 “ Lecture Sermons, the year following, at St.
 “ Mary’s in Oxford, between the commence-
 “ ment of the last month in Lent Term, and
 “ the end of the third week in Act Term.

“ Also I direct and appoint, that the eight
 “ Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be preached
 “ upon either of the following subjects—to
 “ confirm and establish the Christian Faith,
 “ and

“ and to confute all heretics and schismatics
 “ —upon the divine authority of the Holy
 “ Scriptures — upon the authority of the
 “ writings of the primitive Fathers, as to
 “ the faith and practice of the primitive
 “ Church — upon the Divinity of our Lord
 “ and Saviour Jesus Christ — upon the Di-
 “ vinity of the Holy Ghost — upon the Ar-
 “ ticles of the Christian Faith, as compre-
 “ hended in the Apostles’ and Nicene
 “ Creeds.

“ Also I direct, that thirty copies of the
 “ eight Divinity Lecture Sermons shall be
 “ always printed, within two months after
 “ they are preached, and one copy shall be
 “ given to the Chancellor of the University,
 “ and one copy to the Head of every Col-
 “ lege, and one copy to the Mayor of the
 “ city of Oxford, and one copy to be put
 “ into the Bodleian Library; and the ex-
 “ pence of printing them shall be paid out
 “ of the revenue of the Land or Estates given
 “ for establishing the Divinity Lecture Ser-
 “ mons; and the Preacher shall not be paid,
 “ nor

“nor be entitled to the revenue, before they
“are printed.
“Also I direct and appoint, that no per-
“son shall be qualified to preach the Divi-
“nity Lecture Sermons, unless he hath taken
“the Degree of Master of Arts at least, in
“one of the two Universities of Oxford or
“Cambridge; and that the same person
“shall never preach the Divinity Lecture
“Sermons twice.”

S E R M O N I.

I TIM. ii. 5.

*There is one God and one Mediator between God
and Men, the Man Christ Jesus.*

BELIEF in God is the foundation of all religion, both natural and revealed. And as there never was a people so barbarous as to have lost all sense of religion, so there never was a people among whom the notion of a God was entirely obliterated. Even in the lowest state of intellectual degeneracy mankind have still retained some apprehension of a supernatural Power, whose intervention and invisible agency they have invariably acknowledged, as often as events occurred for which they could not account by natural means, or effects were produced for which they could not assign any visible cause. And wherever the faculties of the human

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mind

mind have been cultivated and improved, there has generally prevailed a full persuasion of a great first Cause, from whose creative power all things derived their origin, and by whose superintending Providence they are governed and upheld. Indeed so constant and universal has been the belief of all mankind in the existence of a Deity, that it has by some been imagined to be a principle natural to the mind of man, and born in him. But however this be, we may venture at least to affirm, that it is a truth agreeable to the reason of man, and must always meet with a willing assent from every mind, the faculties of which are not naturally defective, or have not been depraved by vice and sensuality.

That God is one, is a truth which has not been so universally received. Many nations have acknowledged a multiplicity of Deities; and perhaps the unity of the divine nature was never acknowledged by any nation, which had not been in some degree illuminated with the rays of divine light. At one period of the world it was the professed belief of only a single people, who at that very time were under the immediate care and direction

rection of Heaven, and were favoured with positive declarations of the Divine will. And even at present the inhabitants of the unenlightened parts of our globe acknowledge Gods many, and Lords many. And if to us there is but one God, to what shall we attribute our knowledge of this truth, but to the revelation which that same God has been pleased to make of his nature and perfections? But this truth, though, as it should seem, not discoverable without revelation, and perhaps even now not reducible to any first principle, yet, being revealed, strongly recommends itself to the best reason of mankind, and obtains from the approving mind a ready and entire assent.

From the existence of a great first Cause, we naturally proceed to the relation in which we stand, and the duties which we owe to this divine Being. As well as the Creator, he is the Lord and Governor of the universe; and as such may justly claim from all his creatures and subjects adoration and worship; an entire submission to the dispensations of his Providence, and an unreserved obedience to the expressions of his will. He is also our Father and Protector, upon whom

we depend for preservation and support, and from whom must proceed the supply of our wants. He is therefore justly entitled to our reverence and love; to our praise for past instances of bounty, and to our prayers for the things of which we stand in need.

But God is the great King of all the earth, and no less glorious in purity than in greatness: we are sinful dust and ashes. How then will he deign to hold communion with us, or how shall we presume to appear before him? This sense of man's unworthiness, when compared with the Divine majesty and holiness, seems little less familiar to the human mind than the belief of God's existence. And therefore in all ages men, dreading the immediate presence of the Deity, have sought the interposition of Mediators and Intercessors, by whose ministry all intercourse might be carried on between the great objects of their worship and themselves. Thus the Heathens formed to themselves a crowd of Mediators—beings of a middle order—to whom they assigned the office of presenting to the Gods the addresses of men, and of communicating to men the favours of the Gods. And this mode of communication
has

has received the sanction of the true God ; who ordained his covenant with the Israelites in the hand of a Mediator, viz. Moses ; through whom he made known to the people his statutes and judgments. And much after the same manner the people performed to God the religious worship and service which their law prescribed. For they were not permitted to stand before God, and perform in person the rites of their religion ; but were commanded to have recourse to the mediation of their Priests, through whom they presented their addresses and offerings of blood, and from whose interposition they were taught to expect the divine favour and acceptance.

Nor was the New Covenant established without a Mediator. For as " there is one God," so there is " one Mediator between God and Men." And it was to appear in this character for the salvation of a sinful world, that the divine Word, the second person of the ever-blessed Trinity, divested himself of that glory which he had with the Father before the foundation of the world, even from all eternity, and condescended to take upon him our flesh, and to become man. For the

Apostle, having asserted that there is one Mediator between God and men, immediately adds, that this Mediator is "the Man Christ Jesus."

From what has been said, it appears that the mediatorial character implies at least two distinct offices, usually denominated the *prophetical* and the *sacerdotal*; and that a Mediator is either a Prophet or a Priest, according as he is commissioned to act, either in the name of God for the purpose of declaring his will to mankind, or in behalf of men for the purpose of recommending them to the favour of God. Now the mediatorial character of Christ has been generally understood to include both these offices; and accordingly Christ has usually been accounted both a Prophet and a Priest: a Prophet, or the Ambassador of God to men; a Priest, or the Advocate of men with God. To these principal, and, if I may so speak, essential branches of the mediatorial character, Divines, upon the authority of the Scriptures, have added a third; viz. the *regal*; to which our Lord Jesus Christ was admitted after his ascension into heaven, as the reward of his sufferings upon earth, and for the benefit of that Church

Church which he had purchased with his blood.

Nor is it without reason that the name *Christ*, which answers to the Hebrew *Messiah*, and signifies *anointed*, has been thought to indicate the three offices above-mentioned. For as under the law the ceremony of anointing was by God's own appointment the mode of consecration to the three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King; so was Christ also anointed, not indeed with material oil, but with the spiritual unction of the Holy Ghost, to be the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people. He is their Prophet, to declare the will of God, and to make known the way of salvation; he is their Priest, to interpose in their behalf, and by an offering of his own blood to procure for them a favourable acceptance in the sight of God; and he is their King, to distribute among them his manifold gifts of grace during their continuance in this lower world, and to conduct them to ever-enduring mansions of glory in the world to come.

Of these offices the prophetical and regal are universally acknowledged. There never existed a sect of Christians, hardy enough to deny that Christ was that Prophet which should come into the world; or that after

having declared the will of God, and finished the work which was given him to do, he ascended up on high far above all heavens; angels, and authorities and powers being made subject unto him*. But his sacerdotal office,

* Socinus and his immediate followers were strenuous advocates for the regal office, affirming that by virtue of this office Christ was invested with the power of delivering his people from the punishment of sin. Modern Socinians indeed betray an inclination to deprive the Saviour of the regal as well as the sacerdotal character, and to reduce him to the condition of a mere Prophet. This I infer from an observation which occurs in the History of the Corruptions of Christianity, vol. i. p. 272; where the Author, speaking of the above opinion of Socinus, has the following words: "Faustus Socinus, who distinguished himself so much in recovering the original doctrine of the proper humanity of Christ, as to give occasion to all who now hold that doctrine to be called by his name, saw clearly the absurdity of what was advanced by the other reformers concerning satisfaction being made to the justice of God by the death of Christ. Indeed it immediately follows from his principles, that Christ being only a man, though ever so innocent, his death could not, in any proper sense of the word, atone for the sins of other men. He was however far from abandoning the doctrine of redemption in the Scripture sense of the word, that is, of our deliverance from the guilt of sin by his Gospel, as promoting repentance and reformation, and from the punishment due to sin, by his power of giving eternal life to all that obey him. But, indeed, if God himself freely forgives the
" sins

office, that office upon the discharge of which our hopes of life and salvation are principally founded, has unhappily not been so universally acknowledged. There are not wanting men who receive not Christ as their Priest, and who disown any immediate virtue in his death to obtain remission of sins, and to procure for us God's favour and acceptance.

It is easy to perceive that they who thus deny the Priestly office of our Redeemer, do in effect deny the whole scheme of Redemption, as held by our Church, or rather by the universal Church of Christ. In modern times this denial constitutes a distinguishing article in the creed of an heretical sect, called, after the name of its founder, *the Socinian*; which first appeared about the time of the reformation from Popery, and has continued ever since to infest the Church. In our own nation the opinions of this sect have never, from the very first, wanted advocates and abettors; and of late have been most strenuously asserted by a writer of very considerable eminence, in a well-known work, entitled

"sins of men upon their repentance, there could be no occasion, properly speaking, for any thing farther being done to avert the punishment with which they had been threatened."

" A History

“ A History of the Corruptions of Christianity.” Among these corruptions the doctrine of Atonement has obtained a principal place. In point of order it ranks the second; for the history of this doctrine immediately succeeds that of opinions relating to Jesus Christ: and in point of importance it is esteemed by the historian himself inferior to none; as is apparent from the manner in which it is introduced to the notice of his readers. “ As,” says he, “ the doctrine of
“ the divine Unity was infringed by the introduction of that of the Divinity of Christ
“ and of the Holy Ghost (as a person distinct from the Father), so the doctrine of the
“ natural placability of the divine Being, and
“ our ideas of the equity of his government,
“ have been greatly debased by the gradual
“ introduction of the modern doctrine of
“ Atonement^b.” And presently after he tells us, that he conceives this doctrine to be a gross misrepresentation of the character and moral government of God, and to affect many other articles in the scheme of Christianity, greatly disfiguring and depraving it; and therefore he declares his intention of shewing, in a fuller manner than he means to do with

^b Hist. of Cor. vol. i. p. 152.

respect to any other corruption of Christianity, that it has no countenance whatever in reason or the Scriptures, and that the whole doctrine, with every modification of it, has been a departure from the primitive and genuine doctrine of Christianity*.

To an unprejudiced mind it must occasion no little surprize, that a doctrine, which, by the confession of this author, is become in a manner universal, and has taken the firmest hold upon men's minds, should have thus creeped in, and prevailed without the least countenance either from reason or from the Scriptures: and it behoves us to receive with caution, and to examine with care, whatever is advanced in support of so bold an assertion. That the doctrine, if true, is of the greatest importance, will not be denied; since it concerns nothing less than the foundation upon which are built all our hopes of paying to God an acceptable service in this life, and of being admitted to the everlasting enjoyment of him in the life to come. Persuaded myself of its truth, I shall offer no apology for an humble, but honest, attempt, to illustrate and defend it; nor do I know in what other

* Hist. of Cor. p. 153.

way I can employ the ability which God hath given me more advantageously to the cause of religion, or more agreeably to the intention of the Founder of this Lecture.

The doctrine of Atonement, then, is the subject of which I propose to treat, and I trust I shall be able to shew, in opposition to the writer above referred to, that it is contained in the Scriptures, and that the arguments by which it is assailed are in general inconclusive, and not unfrequently wholly inapplicable to the point in question. And because in every controversy it is of the utmost consequence to ascertain and determine what this point is, in order to remove as much as possible all occasion of misconception and erroneous judgment, those copious sources of objection and dispute, it is my design, in the remaining part of this discourse, to prepare the way for the due investigation of the subject before us, by stating the doctrine in its plain and simple form, divested of every circumstance in which the issue of the controversy is not immediately concerned.

And in order to this it will be necessary, in the first place, to ascertain the scriptural meaning of the term *atonement*.

To

To be at one, is an obsolete form of speech, signifying *to be reconciled*, or *to come to an agreement after having been at variance*. And accordingly *atonement*, which by Etymologists is derived from hence, properly signifies *agreement or reconciliation*^d: and in this its primitive sense, which was antiently its common and usual one, it is uniformly taken in our translation of the Scriptures. In the Old Testament it is frequently used with reference to the legal sin-offerings, with the blood of which the Priest is said to *make an atonement*. The original word used on these occasions, which for the most part is thus translated, is also occasionally rendered *to reconcile*; a strong presumption that our Translators annexed to both expressions the same meaning. Thus in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus, the High Priest, on the great day of expiation, is commanded to sprinkle the blood of the sin-offerings, and to *make an atonement for the holy place*; and presently after this very act is called *reconciling* the holy place^e. In the original the word in both

^d See Francisci Junii Etymologicum Anglicanum, and Skinner's Etymologicon Linguae Anglicanae. See also authorities for this use of the word, drawn from the earlier English writers, in Johnson's Dictionary.

^e Lev. xvi. 16, 20.

places is the same; viz. כפר: as it is also in the Septuagint, viz. ἐξιλασνομαι, *to appease* or *make propitious*; which word, for the most part, corresponds to *making atonement* in our version. In the New Testament the term *atonement* occurs but once; and then it unquestionably signifies *reconciliation*. It is in the following passage from St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans. "For if when we were
 " enemies we were reconciled (κατηλλαγημεν)
 " to God by the death of his Son, much
 " more being reconciled (καταλλαγεντες) we
 " shall be saved by his life. And not only
 " so, but we also joy in God through our
 " Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now
 " received the atonement (καταλλαγην)^f" i. e. the reconciliation; as the word had twice before been rendered in this very passage. From all which it is manifest, that the scriptural meaning of *atonement* is *reconciliation*; and accordingly to assert of Christ that he hath *made an atonement for us* by his blood, is the same as to assert that he hath *reconciled us to God* by his blood; or, in other words, that by his death he hath made God propitious to sinful man, and hath procured for all who believe in him pardon and acceptance.

^f Rom. v. 10.

And

And this proposition contains, as I conceive, all that is essential to the doctrine of Atonement. It has indeed been usual to state the doctrine in a fuller manner, so as not simply to assert our reconciliation to God by the blood of Christ, but also to superadd the ground and reason of the reconciliation. And this addition, derived not so much from the positive declarations of Scripture, as from the views which men have entertained of the subject, and their reasonings respecting it, has been so generally acquiesced in and acknowledged, that it is commonly supposed to be inseparably connected with the doctrine, and to constitute a necessary and essential part of it. But however true in itself, it has unfortunately occasioned much misrepresentation and unjust censure, and (as we shall see in the sequel) has been the foundation of most of the principal objections against the doctrine itself. It is therefore become highly useful, and even necessary, to separate from the real question this and every other adventitious circumstance with which it has been usually implicated.

It has perhaps already occurred to every one who hears me, that the circumstance to which I principally refer, as an addition to
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the pure and simple doctrine of atonement, or reconciliation by the death of Christ, is the following; viz. that Christ died to make satisfaction to the divine justice. Now the sacred writers no where, as far as I know, expressly assert any satisfaction at all as having been effected by the death of Christ. At the same time it must be acknowledged, that the generality of Christians, in modern times at least, have concurred in maintaining as above-mentioned, that by the death of Christ satisfaction was made to the justice of God; and so universal has been this concurrence, that the *doctrine of Satisfaction* has been commonly used as a synonymous expression for the *doctrine of Atonement*. Divines of our own country may probably have been confirmed in this use of the term, by its common acceptance. For though it was antiently taken, in what is still its sole scriptural sense, to signify *reconciliation*, yet because reconciliations are for the most part brought about by the aggressor's making satisfaction for his wrong by the payment of an equivalent to the party aggrieved, therefore in process of time *atonement* came to signify *compensation* and *satisfaction*; and men accustomed to this use of the term may have been led to imagine that the work

work of Christ for our redemption, was undertaken with a view to something of this kind. But from whatever cause it has arisen, certain it is, that the death of Christ has been called and accounted not merely a *propitiation*, or that on account of which God is become merciful to man, and man acceptable to God; but further, a *satisfaction*. And this satisfaction is supposed to have been required in consequence of that violation of the divine law, and that disobedience to the divine authority, which occasioned the fall of man. And since the satisfaction must of course be made to God, whose law was broken, and whose authority was disobeyed, to what attribute of the Deity could it with such propriety be ascribed as to his justice, which seems especially concerned to vindicate the honour of the divine law, and to inflict upon offenders the due reward of their evil deeds?

Concerning this satisfaction to the justice of God, there have been principally two opinions. And first, some, and those Divines of great learning and piety, have contended for the absolute necessity of such a satisfaction, in order to maintain the inviolability of the Divine attributes. For they argue that sin is so opposite to the purity and holiness of God,

and of consequence so odious in his sight that it cannot but provoke his displeasure, and expose all who commit it to his wrath and indignation. And since justice is essential to the Divine nature, and exists there in a supreme degree, it must inflexibly require the punishment of those who are thus the objects of wrath: nor is it possible that the punishment due to sin could have been remitted, if satisfaction had not been made to the justice of God. Hence they conclude, that such satisfaction was actually made by Jesus Christ; whose death, being an equivalent for that of the whole human race, obtained our acquittal, and laid the foundation of our title to eternal life.

Others, in the second place, not contending for the absolute necessity of a satisfaction to Divine justice, insist only upon the wisdom and fitness of the measure: and such consider God in the light of a Governor, or Judge, who for the direction of his subjects had given them an express law, and had sanctioned it by denouncing positive punishment against all who should transgress it. Now, say they, it unquestionably became the Almighty Sovereign and Governor of the universe to consult the honour of his law, and
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not to suffer it to be violated with impunity, or without satisfaction, lest the subjects of his authority should be induced to call in question his justice, and to vilify and set at nought his office of Judge. Willing, therefore, to shew mercy to his offending creatures, but unwilling that his forbearance of punishment should endanger the ends of his government, he was pleased to ordain a propitiation for sin. Accordingly he sent into the world his own Son, who, by dying for our sins, obtained our release from all obligation to punishment, while at the same time he made a most glorious display of the righteousness of God. And thus, it is contended, by the appointment of Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, satisfaction was made for sin: the Divine law was satisfied; *i. e.* its claim was silenced, and the sinner was no longer exposed to its rigour: the Divine justice was also satisfied; *i. e.* it no longer required that the punishment due to sin should be inflicted upon the offender. In a word, according to this opinion, Christ is said to have made satisfaction for our sins, not because his death is to be accounted an adequate compensation, or a full equivalent; but because his suffering in our stead maintained the honour of the Divine law, and

gave free scope to the mercy of the Law-giver, without any impeachment or diminution of his justice. And satisfaction, in this qualified sense, has been commonly received among Divines; and especially is maintained by Grotius, in his celebrated treatise against Socinus, expressly entitled "*De Satisfactione Christi*;" and also by Stillingfleet, in his able defence of Grotius against the subtleties of Crellius; both of whom consider God not as a party aggrieved or offended, demanding full amends and adequate compensation for the wrong he had suffered; but as a wise and prudent Governor, requiring such a satisfaction as he might deem necessary for maintaining the authority of his laws, and for enabling him to extend mercy to criminals, without giving encouragement to crime, or in any respect endangering the purposes of government.

Which of these opinions is true, or whether either of them be true, I am not called upon to determine; for neither of them is essential to the doctrine of Atonement: and could it even be proved that both of them are false, the real question would not be at all affected. I cannot however refrain from a few observations, by way of reply to those
harsh

harsh and unmerited censures, to which the doctrine, considered under this view, has unhappily given rise.

I have already had occasion to bring forward an assertion, made by our Opponent at the very commencement of the history with which we are at present concerned ; viz. that “ the doctrine of the natural placability of the divine Being, and our ideas of the equity of his government, have been greatly debased by the introduction of the doctrine of Atonement.” The ground upon which he hazards this assertion is, that this latter doctrine “ represents the divine Being as *withholding* his mercy from the *truly penitent*, till a *full* satisfaction be made to his justice.” Were this indeed the case, there would, apparently at least, be some foundation for the charge, that the doctrine of Atonement debases the natural placability, and misrepresents the character and moral government of God. For rigidly to demand satisfaction for an offence, and, notwithstanding the repentance of the offender, still to continue implacable till the required satisfaction be made, seems to be the part of a merciless and resentful Being, rather than of a benevolent and compassionate God, such as is the

God revealed to us in the holy Scriptures. But this is not the case. On the other hand, the charge thus brought against the doctrine of Atonement is founded upon a gross misstatement of the sentiments of Believers respecting this doctrine, to whom no such representation of the divine Being, as is here supposed, can justly be imputed. Indeed it is not pretended that this representation can be inferred, except from the opinion of those who contend for a full satisfaction to the justice of God, which, as I before observed, is far from being the universal opinion. Nor can it fairly be inferred even from this opinion. For they who assert a satisfaction in its most rigid sense, still contend, that this satisfaction was made, or at least decreed, according to some, from the very foundation of the world; and at furthest immediately after the fall, when as yet man was hardly sensible of his sin and folly. And therefore, even under this view of the doctrine, God cannot be said to *withhold* mercy from the truly penitent, when he was pleased to open a way for the exercise of his mercy, by the satisfaction of his justice, before any repentance on the part of man could possibly have taken place. In truth, the doctrine of Atonement,
under

under whatever view we consider it, is so far from debasing, that it most powerfully confirms and establishes the placability of the Deity. It represents not God as a resentful Being, but as full of mercy and compassion—not vindictively demanding satisfaction; but graciously appointing a propitiation—not withholding mercy from the truly penitent; but even anticipating man's repentance, and when we were enemies to him, freely providing the means of our reconciliation, and sending his Son to die for our sins^{*}.

There is a further misrepresentation of the sentiments of Believers in the statement which our Historian has given, of the manner in which the doctrine of Atonement is connected with that of the divinity of Jesus Christ. In contending for this connection, we are supposed to argue after the following manner. "Sin being an offence against an infinite Being, requires an infinite satisfaction, which can only be made by an infinite person; that is, one who is no less than God himself: Christ therefore, in order to make this infinite satisfaction for the

^{*} See this subject further discussed in Serm. VI.

“ sins of men, must himself be God, equal to the Father ^b.” This argument, as it proceeds upon the supposition that an adequate satisfaction was required for the sins of mankind, can only be objected against those who are advocates for that opinion; and is therefore unfairly attributed to Believers in general. Indeed, even allowing the foundation upon which it is built, it would still be a weak argument, and might easily be retorted. For with no less reason might it be argued, that sin, being committed by a finite creature, requires only a finite satisfaction; to the making of which a finite person is fully adequate. If such an argument for the divinity of Christ has unwarily fallen from any friend to the doctrine of Atonement, it is to be lamented that it should have been hazarded unnecessarily, and without sufficient warrant from Scripture. We believe indeed the divinity of Christ, because the Scriptures have expressly declared it: but we pretend not to infer it from the supposed necessity of an infinite satisfaction: on the contrary, we infer from it the love of God towards us, of which the appointment of his divine Son to be the

^b Hist. of Cor. p. 153.

propitiation for our sins, is a most convincing proof; and we build upon it a sure and certain expectation of his future favour. “ He
“ that spared not his own Son, but delivered
“ him up for us all, how shall he not with
“ him also freely give us all things¹ ?”

Another circumstance connected by our Historian with the doctrine of Atonement, and made as it were to spring from it, is, the imputation of Christ's righteousness to Believers as the ground of their acceptance with God. What was before observed respecting satisfaction to Divine justice, is also true of imputed righteousness; it is no where expressly asserted in the sacred writings. And although our Historian appears in words to consider it as a necessary appendage to the doctrine of Atonement, and as universally maintained by the advocates of this doctrine; yet he could not be ignorant that the fact is otherwise; and that imputed righteousness is not more a ground of controversy between those who believe the doctrine of Atonement and those who do not, than it is between those who believe the doctrine among them-

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

selves. They who hold imputed righteousness, seem to be of opinion, that, since Christ died in order to bear the punishment of our sins, no higher effect can properly be ascribed to his death, than our deliverance from condemnation. But something further is necessary to restore us to God's favour; viz. a perfect righteousness. But since such righteousness is not inherent in even the best of men, it can be ours only by imputation. And hence they argue, that, as by the imputation of our guilt to Christ we are delivered from the punishment of sin; so by the imputation of his righteousness to us we are restored to the favour of God. But this doctrine, so strongly insisted upon by some, is, in the estimation of others, unnecessary in the Christian scheme. It is granted, that, in order to forgiveness, we must be cleansed from the guilt of sin by the blood of Christ: now they argue, that to those who are thus cleansed, sin is not imputed; that is, in other words, they are accounted righteous; they are in the sight of God, as though they had never offended; and consequently are again become, what, had they continued innocent, they would never have ceased to be, objects of his love and favour. And thus, according to this argument,

ment, not only pardon, but acceptance also, is the immediate effect of Christ's death.

I am not concerned to shew which of these opinions is most consonant to the spirit and intention of the sacred writings. It is sufficient that imputed righteousness, however consistent with the doctrine of Atonement, is nevertheless not essential to it, and may therefore be considered as an addition to the pure and simple doctrine. And I cannot but observe, that this or any other doctrine is misrepresented, when that is assumed as necessary and essential, which is merely adventitious and accidental; and which, if denied, would still leave the genuine doctrine entire and unimpaired.

As it is the professed intention of this discourse to determine the scriptural meaning of *atonement*, in order to ascertain the real nature of the doctrine, I think it not improper in this place to animadvert upon the sense which our Historian has attempted to affix to this term; as often as it occurs in the Old Testament—a sense, which, if it could be supported, would entirely exclude every idea of propitiation. He tells us, that, “from comparing all the passages in which *atonement* is

“ is mentioned, it is evident that it signifies
 “ the making of any thing *clean* or *holy*, so
 “ as to be fit to be used in the service of
 “ God; or, when applied to a *person*, fit to
 “ come into the presence of God; God
 “ being considered as in a peculiar manner
 “ the King and Sovereign of the Israelitish
 “ nation, and, as it were, keeping a court
 “ among them^k.”

That the authority of the Seventy (who, as above stated, render the original word by *ἐξιλασκομαι*, to appease or make propitious) is decidedly against this interpretation, cannot be denied. The truth is, there runs through the whole a mistake, arising from a partial view of the subject, and a misconception of the nature and intention of the legal atonements. That the person or thing, for which an atonement was made, was in consequence of the atonement cleansed, or made holy, and fit for the service of God, the Scriptures expressly assert. But the efficacy of these atonements did not stop here. The end proposed by them was to recommend and make acceptable to God the things intended for his service, which on account of some

^k Hist. of Cor. p. 193.

unfitness,

unfitness, either natural or acquired, were objects of displeasure rather than of favour. Accordingly atonement implies a double effect; one referring to the *thing*, the other to *God*. With respect to the thing, it implies a removal of the uncleanness which made it an object of displeasure; with respect to God, it implies a removal of the displeasure which the uncleanness had occasioned. The atonement was made *for* the thing, which being in itself unclean and unholy, was in consequence cleansed and sanctified: but it was made *to* God, that he might be reconciled to, and take pleasure in, those things which, in their natural state, were unworthy and unfit for his service. Hence an atonement was made for the altar, when it was originally consecrated¹, and for the Levites, when they were dedicated to their office and ministry^m, in order that, being cleansed from that pollution which naturally cleaves to all terrestrial things, they might become acceptable to God, and fit for his service. In like manner, and for the same reason, atonements were appointed in cases where the uncleanness was contracted: for a house after having been in-

¹ Excd. xxix. 36, 37.

^m Num. viii. 12.

fects with leprosy^a; at the purification of a leper^o; after involuntary uncleanness^p and sins of ignorance^q; as well as in some cases of wilful transgression, upon repentance and restitution^r. I am ready to allow, and I shall hereafter^s shew at large, that the atonements in all these cases had no relation to the pardon of sin in a moral sense: that was only to be effected by the atonement made by Christ. I agree that they concerned only the decency and propriety of public worship, qualifying for appearing before God in the earthly tabernacle, and for being employed in his service, for which any thing unclean or polluted was considered as disqualified. Still I contend, that they referred immediately to God, whose favourable acceptance they were intended to procure; and were effectual to the pardon, if not of sin in a *moral* sense, at least of something analogous to it; and which, by way of distinction, may not improperly be called *legal* sin.

What has now been said is, I trust, sufficient to ascertain the true point upon which

^a Lev. xiv. 53.

^o Lev. xiv. 18.

^p Lev. xv. 15, 30.

^q Lev. iv. 20, 26, 35.—v. 18.

^r Lev. vi. 5.

^s See Serm. III.

the controversy turns. The doctrine of Atonement is, as we have seen, the doctrine of reconciliation; and the question, freed from all extraneous and unessential matter, and reduced to its proper dimensions, is, whether Christ immediately by his death propitiated God, and procured for us the benefits of the Gospel-covenant? The Socinian heresy maintains the negative side of this question, in opposition to the Catholick Church, which, till thus disturbed, peaceably acquiesced in the affirmative. The Catholic faith, in this important article, I have undertaken to illustrate and defend: and what I have to offer may fitly be reduced to two general heads, according as its intention is either directly to confirm the doctrine in question, or to obviate objections against it. Agreeably to this division, I propose, in the sequel of these Discourses,

First, to adduce the positive proofs which the Scriptures afford in favour of this doctrine: And,

Secondly, to consider the principal objections which its Opponents, and especially the Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity, have urged against it.

Upon

Upon the former of these heads I propose to enter in the next Discourse. In the mean time, let no man be disappointed if little shall be offered to his consideration, with which he was not previously acquainted. It would be as difficult as it is unnecessary, to advance any thing new upon a subject which has been so often and so ably discussed. In investigating any point of Christian doctrine, all that can now be expected, and perhaps all that ought to be attempted, is to state with accuracy and precision what the true faith is; and having selected the best arguments in its defence, to arrange them in the clearest order, and to place them in the most striking point of view; and if either new objections have been raised, or old ones revived, to oppose them with vigour and authority, but with temper and moderation: and whoever performs this successfully, does no mean service to the cause of truth and religion. Of the present attempt it becomes not me to speak: I have only to request your candid attention to what shall be offered.

S E R M O N II.

I TIM. i. 15.

This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.

TO deny that Jesus Christ is the Saviour of mankind, would be in effect to deny the truth of the Gospel, and to renounce the Christian name: and therefore upon this great and fundamental point there can be no question among Christians; all of every sect and denomination must assent to the general doctrine of the text, and, with the Apostle, account it "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance."

But though Christians must thus in general terms ascribe the salvation of a sinful world to Jesus Christ, yet concerning the

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method

method of this salvation, and the means by which it was effected, there may prevail, and unhappily there has prevailed, no little difference of opinion. The Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity refers it entirely to the *word* and *doctrine* of Christ: we, in conjunction with the majority of Christians, ascribe it immediately to his *death*. According to the former, the Saviour of the world is merely a Prophet, commissioned to promote by his teaching the reformation of the sinner: according to the latter, he is also a Priest, consecrated to appear before God in behalf of mankind, and, by an offering of his own blood, to make reconciliation for sins. In the Socinian scheme the *death* of the Saviour no otherwise promotes the great end of his mission, than as it serves to confirm the doctrine which he taught, and to exhibit a most perfect example of obedience to God: by the Catholick Church it is accounted the foundation of all our hopes of pardon and acceptance, and the means of procuring for us all the benefits of the Gospel-covenant. And this faith of the Catholick Church respecting the priestly office of our Redeemer, and the efficacy of his death, is that doctrine of Atonement, the proofs of which, agreeably to

to the plan proposed in my last Discourse, I am now to lay before you.

As *atonement* is a term borrowed from the Levitical law, and, when applied to the work of Christ for our salvation, is to be taken in its strictly legal sense, it will much assist our investigation of the doctrine in question, if, in the first place, we enquire after what manner the legal atonements were made.

We learn from the Old Testament, that when the Israelites were first incorporated as a religious body, the Tabernacle was the appointed place of public worship; and that for the service of the Tabernacle the order of Priests was instituted, to whom it exclusively belonged to stand before God, and to perform, in the name and in behalf of the people, the accustomed rites of their religion; nor could the members of this sacred community, otherwise than through *their* ministration, make their addresses to God, or, when excluded from his favour, obtain forgiveness and reconciliation.

The ministration of the Priests consisted for the most part in offering gifts and sacrifices for sin: for the worship of the Israelites was entirely by sacrifice; and all their addresses to

the Deity were performed by means of sacrificial rites, which served as symbols or external signs of their internal affections and desires. By sacrifice they addressed themselves to God either in praise and thanksgiving for past instances of his bounty, or in prayer for a continuance of his goodness. By sacrifice they implored forgiveness for any sin or uncleanness, which had separated them from the congregation of God's people, and had excluded them from the worship of the Tabernacle. In this latter case (for with these sacrifices for sin, or sin-offerings as they were commonly called, we are principally concerned) the Priest interceded for the excluded person, by offering or presenting to God the blood of the appointed victim; by which he was said to *make atonement*: for the power of making atonement was in the blood, agreeably to the testimony of God himself, when he assigns the reason of the law which forbids the eating of blood: "For the
" life of the flesh is in the blood; and I have
" given it to you upon the altar to make an
" atonement for your souls; for it is the blood
" that maketh an atonement for the soul^a."

^a Lev. xvii. 11.

And, in consequence of the atonement thus made, the sinner obtained forgiveness and re-admission to all the privileges of the Covenant.

It appears, then, that under the law two things were generally necessary to atonement; a victim, by the offering of whose blood the atonement was made; and a Priest, by whom the blood was offered. And I conceive that I shall sufficiently prove the doctrine in question, if I can shew from the Scriptures that in the Christian dispensation there are corresponding circumstances; that the death or blood of Christ has a power and influence corresponding to that which in the Old Testament is attributed to the blood of the sin-offerings; and that to Christ himself is ascribed an office and ministry corresponding to that which was formerly discharged by the Levitical Priests in the earthly Tabernacle. In the present Discourse I shall enter upon the proof of the former of these points: viz. that the sacred writers ascribe to the death or blood of Christ a power and influence, corresponding to that which, under the Old Testament, was attributed to the blood of the sin-offerings.

In speaking of the legal atonements^b, I have

^b Serm. I, p. 28.

already had occasion to observe, that the end for which they were appointed, was to recommend and make acceptable to God the things intended for his service, which on account of some uncleanness or pollution were displeasing in his sight: and that, in order to accomplish this end, they had the power of removing both the pollution which had occasioned the Divine displeasure, and also the displeasure itself, to which the pollution had given rise. Accordingly two things are implied in atonement, viz. the purification of the sinner, and the propitiation of the divine Being.

Now by sin we are represented in Scripture as impure, polluted creatures; offensive and displeasing to God, and objects of his wrath and vengeance. But we are also represented as rescued from these evils by the blood of Christ; to which is expressly ascribed the power of cleansing from the pollution of sin, and of procuring for us the favour of a reconciled God.

And in the first place, purification from the pollution of sin is ascribed in the Scriptures to Christ, and to the influence of his blood; by which we are said to be *justified* and *sanctified*. Now to be justified, is to be absolved from

from guilt, and to be considered as just and righteous. But St. Paul, speaking of Christ, assures the Romans, that they were "justified" by his blood^c. Again, to be sanctified, is to be cleansed from that pollution which renders all mankind, in their natural state, odious and offensive in the sight of God, and to be made holy and fit for his service. This sanctifying power the same Apostle, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, gives to the death of Christ, asserting, that he "loved the Church, and gave himself for it, that he might *sanctify* and *cleanse* it^d." And to the same purpose, in his Epistle to Titus, he declares that one of the ends for which Christ gave himself for us, was, that he might "*purify* to himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works^e." In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the blood of Christ is said to "*purge* our conscience from dead works^f;" and we are also said to be "*sanctified* through the offering of the body of Christ^g." And St. John, in the most express language, declares of those who walk in the light, *i. e.* who believe the Gospel, that "the blood of Jesus Christ *cleanseth* them

^c Rom. v. 9.^d Eph. v. 25, 26.^e Tit. ii. 14.^f Heb. ix. 14.^g Heb. x. 10.

“ from all sin ^b.” And in the Revelation he addresses himself to Christ, under the character of him who “ loved us, and *washed* us “ from our sins in his own blood ^c.”

Secondly, the removal of God’s displeasure, and our restoration to his favour, are also ascribed to Christ, who is represented as *appeasing* or *propitiating* God, *making our peace* with him, and *reconciling* us to him. I have already ^d observed, that, in the Levitical law, the Hebrew word כפר, which by our Translators is sometimes rendered *to make atonement for*, and sometimes *to reconcile*, is expressed in the Septuagint version by ἐξίλασκαμαι, to appease or make propitious^e. In conformity to this language, our blessed Lord, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is called “ a merciful and “ faithful High Priest, to make reconcilia- “ tion (εἰς τὸ ἱλασκεσθαι) for the sins of the “ people ^f.” And St. John urges it as a proof of the love of God towards us, that he “ sent “ his Son to be the *propitiation* (ἱλασμον) for “ our sins ^g.” And in another place he comforts us with the assurance, that, “ if we sin, “ we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus

^b 1 John i. 7.

^c Rev. i. 5.

^d Serm. I. p. 14.

^e Lev. xvi. 16, 17, 20.

^f Heb. ii. 17.

^g 1 John iv. 10.

“ Christ

“ Christ the righteous, who is the *propitiation* (ἱλασμος) for our sins.” And St. Paul, having asserted that we are justified freely by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ, goes on to declare, that this Jesus “ God hath set forth to be a *propitiation* (ἱλασμηριον) through faith in his blood.”

Many also are the passages which speak of Christ as our *peace-maker*, and the means of our *reconciliation* with God: such as that of St. Paul to the Romans, “ For if when we were enemies we were *reconciled* to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the *atonement*”; in the original καταλλαγην, i. e. the *reconciliation*, as the word was rendered in the former part of the passage’. And again, in his Epistle to the Ephesians; “ But now in Christ Jesus, ye, who sometimes were far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ: for he is *our peace*, who hath

* 1 John ii. 2.

p Rom. iii. 25.

q Rom. v. 10.

r See Serm. I. p. 14.

“ made

" made both one, and hath broken down the
 " middle wall of partition between us, hav-
 " ing abolished in his flesh the enmity, even
 " the law of commandments contained in
 " ordinances; for to make in himself of
 " twain one new man, so making peace; and
 " that he might *reconcile* both unto God in
 " one body by the cross, having slain the en-
 " mity thereby '." In this passage the Apostle
 makes the death of Christ upon the cross, the
 means of letting in the Gentiles to a partici-
 pation of religious privileges, which before
 were confined to the Jews; and by abolish-
 ing the ceremonial law, which originally
 made, and served still to keep up, a separation
 between them, of reducing them both into
 one body, and of reconciling both, thus in-
 corporated, to God. And in his Epistle to
 the Colossians he affirms, that, having made
peace through the blood of his cross, it pleased
 the Father, " by him to *reconcile* all things
 " unto himself'."

And thus with respect to those two leading
 circumstances, which are necessarily implied
 in atonement, and in which, if I may so
 speak, the very essence of atonement consists,

* Eph. ii. 13, 14, 15, 16.

* Col. i. 20.

viz. the purification of the sinner, and the propitiation of the Divine being, the blood of Christ appears to correspond most exactly to that blood which was given upon the Altar under the legal dispensation, and may therefore justly be considered as given for the same end, viz. to make an atonement for the soul.

But besides these positive declarations, ascribing to Christ's blood that same influence by which the legal atonements were effected, there are also in the holy Scriptures various passages, which tend most powerfully to confirm the doctrine in question, by exhibiting the death of Christ under such representations as declare it to be to us, what the sin-offerings were to the Israelites of old, the means of our deliverance from the punishment of sin, and of our restoration to the favour of God.—Of these representations, one of the principal is that of a *price* or *ransom*.

A *price*, in the common acceptation of the word, is something given in exchange for some other thing: and this price becomes a *ransom*, when it is given for the deliverance of a person who is in a state of bondage or captivity; and the deliverance thus obtained is properly called *redemption*. For redemption,
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in its original and proper meaning, is somewhat more than mere deliverance; it is a *purchased* deliverance—a deliverance effected by the payment of a stipulated price; which price, as above stated, is properly called a *ransom*.

Now the natural state of man is described in Scripture as a state of the most abject and servile bondage. He is said to be sold under sin^{*}; to be the servant of sin^{*}; to be under the power and dominion of the devil, of whom he is taken captive at his will^{*}: and Christ, who delivered us from this bondage, acquired from hence the name of *Redeemer*; the deliverance itself is called our *redemption*; and the *ransom*, or price which he paid for our redemption, is asserted to be his own blood.

In the twenty-fifth chapter of Leviticus, which treats of the redemption of servants, the Septuagint version expresses the act of redeeming by the verb *λυτρω*; the redemption by *λυτρωσις*; and the ransom, or price of redemption, by *λυτρον*. The same language is used in the New Testament, to express our redemption from the bondage of sin and Satan, and from all the miseries consequent upon

^{*} Rom. vii. 14.

^{*} Rom. vi. 17.

^{*} 2 Tim. ii. 26.

the fall, by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Speaking of himself, he says, that “ the Son
“ of Man came to give his life a *ransom*
“ (*λυτρον*) for many¹.” And St. Paul says of
him, that he “ gave himself a *ransom* (*αντι-*
“ *λυτρον*) for all².” And the same Apostle
asserts of him, that “ in him we have *redemp-*
“ *tion* (*την απολυτρωση*) through his blood, even
“ the forgiveness of sins³.” And St. Peter
says expressly, “ ye were not *redeemed* (*ελυ-*
“ *τρωθητε*) with corruptible things, as silver
“ and gold,—but with the precious blood of
“ Christ⁴.”

Of the same import are those passages
which represent us simply as having been
bought or *purchased* by Christ. St. Peter
speaks of some “ who denied the Lord that
“ *bought* them (*τον αγορασαντα αυτους*)⁵ ;” and
says St. Paul, “ ye are *bought* (*ηγορασθητε*) with
“ a price⁶ :” which price is expressly speci-
fied in the Revelation of St. John, “ Thou
“ wast slain, and hast *redeemed* us to God
“ by thy *blood*⁷ :” the word in the original is
ηγορασας, thou hast *purchased* us, or paid for

¹ Matt. xx. 28. ² 1 Tim. ii. 6. ³ Eph. i. 7. Coll. i. 14.

⁴ 1 Pet. i. 18, 19. ⁵ 2 Pet. ii. 1. ⁶ 1 Cor. vi. 20.

⁷ Rev. v. 9.

us the price of thy blood. Now that the blood of Christ, considered as a price or ransom, corresponds in power and influence to the sin-offerings under the law, is evident from one of the passages above quoted, in which the redemption, ascribed to his blood, is expressly called *the forgiveness of sins*; the very benefit which the Israelites obtained through the legal atonements.

Another representation of the death of Christ, much to our present purpose, is that of a *punishment* undergone for us, and in our stead.

Under the legal dispensation, God was pleased to intimate his acceptance of vicarious suffering, by the very appointment of victims, the shedding of whose blood made atonement for the soul. For since in this case the death of the victim discharged the sinner from all obligation to punishment, what is this, in reality, but a substitution of the former in the room of the latter? And this indeed may be inferred from the very declaration, that it is *the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul*: that is, as the Septuagint renders it, *αὐτὴ ψυχῆς*, *instead of the soul*: which implies, that the life of the victim was given and accepted for
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the life of the sinner: or, in other words, that the victim was substituted in the room of the sinner. And this is further confirmed by a ceremony, observed at the presentation of a victim, intended for a sin-offering, at the door of the Tabernacle. For he who brought the victim was commanded to lay his hand upon the head of the animal^f: which action was esteemed an acknowledgment of his own guilt, and a prayer that it might be punished in the victim upon which his hand was laid. And accordingly we find, in the Rabbinical writers, a set form of prayer, which, according to them, was always used upon this occasion. In this form the delinquent acknowledges his offence, and professes his repentance; and concludes with a petition that the victim, upon which he laid his hands, *might be his expiation*. By which last expression he was, as the Jews inform us, understood to mean, that the victim might be substituted in his room, and that the punishment which himself had merited, might fall upon the head of his offering^g.

^f Lev. iv. 4, 15, 24, 29.

^g See Outram de Sacrificiis, lib. i. cap. xv. § 10. where the Reader will find the penitential forms which, as the Jews themselves assert, were antiently used on these occasions.

Now

Now that Christ was substituted in our stead, may be inferred from the passages above alleged, which speak of his blood as a *price* or *ransom*. For since a price is properly that which is given in exchange for some other thing, it may be considered as substituted in the room of that other; and consequently Christ, whose life was given as the price of our deliverance from death, may be considered as having been substituted in our stead. And to this agree the words of our Lord, above quoted; "The Son of Man came to give his life a ransom *for* many;" *λυτρον ἀντι πολλων*, a ransom *instead of* many: and also those of St. Paul, "He gave himself a ransom *for* all;" *ἀντιλυτρών*, a ransom *instead of* all.

This substitution may also be inferred from the words of Caiphas the High Priest, which, as St. John informs us, he spake prophetically concerning Christ: "It is," says he, "expedient for us that one man should die *for* the people, and that the whole nation perish not^h."

And that Christ was thus substituted in our stead, in order that, by his own suffering, he

^h John xi. 50.

might deliver us from the punishment due to sin, is manifest from those passages of Scripture which speak of him as *bearing our sins*. Isaiah, prophesying concerning the Messiah, declares, that “the Lord hath *laid on him the iniquity of us all*”¹; and again, that “he shall *bear the iniquities*,” and also that “he *bare the sin of many*”². And these prophecies are declared in the New Testament to have been accomplished in the person of our blessed Saviour; who, according to St. Peter, “his own self *bare our sins* in his own body on the tree”³. And in the Epistle to the Hebrews it is said that “he was offered to *bear the sins of many*”⁴. Now to *bear sin*, as often as the idea of suffering is implied, is, in Scripture-language, to *bear the punishment of sin*, as is evident from the words of Ezekiel: “The Son shall not *bear the iniquity of the Father*”⁵; where the meaning, undoubtedly, is, the Son shall not be *punished for the iniquity* of the Father.

And that the sufferings of Christ are to be considered in the light of a punishment, is further evident from the words of St. Paul;

¹ Is. liii. 6.

² Is. liii. 11, 12.

³ 1 Pet. ii. 24.

⁴ Heb. ix. 28.

⁵ Ezek. xviii. 20.

“ Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of
 “ the law, being made a *curse* for us; for it
 “ is written, Cursed is every one that hang-
 “ eth on a tree^o.” Where by “ the curse of
 “ the law” we are to understand, the punish-
 ment denounced by the law against sin; from
 which that we might be delivered, Christ
 condescended to be considered as a malefactor,
 and to suffer as such. In the same sense we
 may also understand the Apostle in another
 place; “ for he hath made him to be *sin* for
 “ us, who knew no sin^p.” To these we
 may add the passages of Scripture, which assert
 of Christ, that he “ suffered for sins the
 “ just for the unjust^q”; that he “ died for
 “ the ungodly^r”; that he “ gave himself
 “ for us^s”; that he “ died for our sins^t”;
 and “ was delivered for our offences^u.”
 These, and a variety of similar expressions,
 which perpetually occur in the Scriptures, all
 in their plain and obvious sense conspire to
 prove, that Christ, being substituted in our
 stead, hath by his suffering delivered us from
 that curse and punishment, to which, by reason
 of sin, we were become obnoxious: in this re-

^o Gal. iii. 13.

^r Rom. v. 6.

^u Rom. iv. 25.

^p 2 Cor. v. 21.

^t Tit. ii. 14.

^q 1 Pet. iii. 18.

^s 1 Cor. xv. 3.

spect corresponding to the legal sacrifices for sin, by which a similar deliverance was effected.

I have reserved for the last place those passages of Scripture; in which the death of Christ is represented to us as a sacrifice.

Among the Israelites, the sacrifices, which their law either permitted or prescribed, were of various kinds, and have received different denominations, according to the intention of the worshipper, and the purpose for which they were offered. If the end proposed was to acknowledge a grateful sense of God's goodness, and to return him thanks and praise for past instances of his bounty, the sacrifices employed for this purpose were called *eucharistic*. If God was addressed in order to obtain a continuance of his favour, or to solicit either deliverance from some impending evil, or the grant of some expected good, recourse was had to *vows* and *free-will offerings*. If, again, the worshipper was in a state of sin or uncleanness, and was in consequence separated from the congregation, and excluded from the worship of the Tabernacle, he implored forgiveness and re-admission to his religious privileges, by *expiatory* sacrifices. It is to sacrifices of this latter kind that the

writers of the New Testament in general refer, when they speak of Christ as a victim slain and offered for the sins of mankind. Thus when St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, asserts of Christ, that he “ loved us, and gave himself for us, an offering and “ a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling “ favour,” what is this but ascribing to the death of Christ the same effect which the burnt sacrifices, under the law, once possessed? for from them God is said to have smelled a sweet favour; and they are expressly declared to be “ accepted for the offerers, to make “ atonement for them *.”

But the principal sacrifices under the law, to which an expiatory virtue is ascribed, are the *sin-offerings*: and accordingly to them we have most frequent references; and especially to the sin-offerings which were offered on the feast of expiation. Isaiah, who prophesied of the Messiah, that he should bear our iniquities, prophesied also, that his soul should be made an “ offering for sin”; and, agreeably to this prophecy, we are told, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that Christ “ was “ offered to bear the sins of many;” and that “ we are sanctified,” that is, delivered from

* Eph. v. 2.

† Is. liii. x.

* Lev. i. 4—9.

† Heb. ix. 28.

the pollution of sin, "through the *offering* of "his body^a." It is also with reference to the same sacrifices, that St. Peter, speaking of our redemption by the blood of Christ, calls him "a *lamb* without blemish and without "spot^b:" and that John the Baptist styles him "the *lamb* of God which taketh away "the sin of the world^c." And perhaps the true interpretation of a passage above quoted^d, in which it is said that he was made *sin* for us, is, that he was made a *sin-offering* for us; agreeably to the idiom of the Hebrew language, in which חטאת, which properly signifies *sin*, signifies also the *offering* for sin^e.

But besides these references to the Levitical sacrifices in general, there are other passages of Scripture, which, in speaking of the death of Christ, directly refer to such sacrifices as were appointed to be offered at stated times and upon particular occasions. And this I conceive to be the case with the words delivered by our Lord himself at the institu-

^a Heb. x. 10.

^b 1 Pet. i. 19.

^c John i. 29.

^d 2 Cor. v. 21.

^e This idiom is preserved in the Septuagint version, where *ἁμαρτία* (the very word here used by the Apostle) sometimes signifies a *sin-offering*. See Lev. iv. 21.

tion of the Eucharist, in which there appears a direct reference to the sacrifices offered at the dedication of the Mosaical covenant.

The Eucharist is a sacred rite, ordained by our Lord for the express purpose of continuing in his Church a perpetual memory of his death, and of that peculiar benefit which the shedding of his blood was to procure for mankind. In this holy sacrament bread and wine are the appointed symbols of his body and blood. Of the bread he says, "This is my body:" and of the wine more expressly, "This is my blood of the New Testament, which is shed for many, for the remission of sins¹." The mention of a *New Testament* naturally reminds us of another, which, by the introduction of this, became *old*, and was ready to vanish away. And the expression, "This is my *blood* of the New Testament," refers us immediately to that blood which Moses, when he dedicated the Old Testament, emphatically calls the *blood of the Covenant*, or *Testament*, which God had made with his people². The blood of the New Testament was indeed shed for *many*; even as many, of whatever nation or kin-

¹ Matt. xxvi. 26, 28. ² Exod. xxiv. 8. and Heb. ix. 20^d
dred,

dred, as should believe in Jesus; in this respect differing from the blood of the Old Testament, which was shed only for a *single family*, the descendants of Abraham: but the end for which it was shed is the same in both, viz. the remission of sins. That the blood of the Old Testament had in view this end, we affirm upon the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews: "Whereupon," says the Apostle, "neither the first Testament
 " was dedicated without blood. For, when
 " Moses had spoken every precept to all the
 " people according to the law, he took the
 " blood of calves and of goats, with water,
 " and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled
 " both the book and all the people, saying,
 " This is the blood of the Testament which
 " God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover,
 " he sprinkled likewise with blood both the
 " Tabernacle and all the vessels of the mi-
 " nistry. And almost all things are by the
 " law *purged* with blood; and without shed-
 " ding of blood is no *remission* ^a." It is evi-
 dent from this passage, that the sacrifices
 offered at the dedication of the Old Testa-
 ment, were of the expiatory kind, and that

^a Heb. ix. 18—22.

the blood then shed was intended to *purify* the persons and things included within the covenant; or, as the same thing is also expressed in other words, to obtain for them *remission*; that is, a removal of the guilt or pollution which rendered them unacceptable to God. And the Apostle immediately proceeds to reason from the things of the law, which he calls *patterns of things in the heavens*; that is, patterns of the Gospel-dispensation, to the Gospel-dispensation itself; which, he declares, was purified after the same manner, only with blood of an infinitely higher value. “It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these;” these sacrifices of brute beasts: “but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these,” even with the sacrifice of Christ himself. Agreeably to our Lord’s own declaration, in the passage more immediately under consideration, where, speaking of his own blood, which, in contradistinction to the blood of the Mosaical covenant, he calls the blood of the New Testament, he asserts, that it was shed “for the remission of sins.” It is

¹ Heb. ix. 23.

therefore

therefore in the highest degree probable that our Lord, when he instituted the Eucharist, intended a reference to the dedication of the Old Covenant, and to the sacrifices offered upon that occasion. This at least is certain, that, in speaking of his own death, he employs the sacrificial language of the law, and ascribes to his blood that power of cleansing from the pollution of sin, which is attributed, in the Old Testament, to the legal sin-offerings. Consequently the passage before us affords a positive proof that the blood of Christ was intended to make atonement; and was considered in no other light by our Lord himself.

But the most illustrious proof of the point in question may be derived from this same Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the Apostle institutes a comparison, or parallel, between the blood of Christ and that blood which the legal High Priest was accustomed to offer, on the feast of expiation, in the inner Tabernacle, or, as it is commonly called, the Holy of Holies; expressly maintaining, that as, by the sanctifying influence of the latter, the Israelites were qualified for the ceremonial service of the Tabernacle; so by the blood of Christ,

to

to which is ascribed a corresponding influence, Believers are qualified for the spiritual service required by the Gospel.

But I must not now enter upon this part of the argument, which will be found sufficiently copious to furnish matter for a separate Discourse. I shall therefore reserve the full discussion of it for the next Lecture.

S E R M O N III.

HEB. ix. 13, 14.

For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, through the eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

THE design of this Epistle to the Hebrews being to exalt the Christian dispensation, and to assert its pre-eminence above the legal, the Apostle, with this view, among other things, draws a comparison, or parallel, between the blood of Christ and the sin-offerings under the law; attributing to the former a superior efficacy, in accomplishing the very end for which the latter were expressly instituted, viz. the expiation of sin: thus

thus furnishing us with a most convincing and undeniable argument, in support of the doctrine for which we contend.

The text (in which the above-mentioned parallel is drawn in the strongest and most pointed manner) is naturally divided into two distinct parts or branches. In the former, the Apostle makes mention of certain sacrifices, ordained by the law; to which, in the latter, he opposes the blood of Christ; ascribing to both, though in an unequal degree, a similar power, for the purpose of producing a corresponding effect.

That we may the more readily apprehend the full force of the argument to be derived from this important passage, it will be necessary to enter somewhat at large into the several particulars referred to by the Apostle, and especially those in the first branch of the text; which, accordingly, I shall endeavour to explain in order.

By the "blood of bulls and of goats," the Apostle undoubtedly means those expiatory sacrifices, which were annually offered on a solemn festival, instituted for the express purpose of making an atonement for the whole congregation of the Israelites; and therefore emphatically

phatically called the *feast of expiation*. This is evident from the context, in which mention is made of the High Priest's entrance into the Holy of Holies, with the blood of the sacrifices here referred to; which he was never permitted to do, except upon this occasion. The ceremonies appointed to be used, on each return of this great solemnity, are described at large in the sixteenth chapter of Leviticus. It will be sufficient for our present argument briefly to state, that, after the victims were slain, the High Priest took of the blood, and carried it with him through the vail into the inner Tabernacle, and there offered it, or presented it to God, by sprinkling it with his finger upon and before the mercy-seat; making, by this ceremony, the appointed atonement.

To the blood of bulls and of goats, the Apostle adds, "the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean." The law respecting this victim may be found in the nineteenth chapter of the book of Numbers: from which we learn, that a red heifer, in which was no blemish, and upon whose neck the yoke had never come, was brought and slain in presence of the Priest; who took of the blood, and sprinkled it with his finger, seven times, towards

towards the Tabernacle. The body was then burned before him, and afterwards the ashes were collected, and laid up for the use of the congregation, to be applied as occasion required. The mode of application was by taking of the ashes, and pouring upon it running water in a vessel. The unclean person was sprinkled with hyssop dipped in this water, and was by this ceremony cleansed from the pollution which he had contracted.

The text leads us to consider, in the next place, the virtue and efficacy which the blood or ashes of the victims here referred to, was ordained to have; it “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh.” It sanctified—in the original *ἀγιάζει*, a word frequently used, in the Septuagint version, to signify such a cleansing or purification of a thing taken from common use, as consecrates it, or makes it holy and meet for the service of God*. The Israelites were a people precisely in this situation. God had selected them from the rest of mankind, had called them with a holy calling, and prepared them for his own immediate service. As his peculiar people, they enjoyed advan-

* See below, p. 74.

tages and privileges, to which the other nations of the earth had no pretension; especially the glorious privilege of access to God, whose visible presence displayed in the Tabernacle they were permitted to approach. While other nations were afar off, and, as it were, without God in the world, cut off from all communion with him, and even unacquainted with his name, They were the favoured people of the Most High, who condescended to make a covenant with them, and to dwell among them. While other nations were left to the suggestions of their own corrupt imaginations, without the knowledge of their duty, and without encouragement to practise it, They had a guide to instruct, and promises to allure them: God gave to them a written law for the direction of their conduct, and covenanted to accept and reward that worship and service which himself had enjoined. Separate from the rest of mankind, and forbidden to participate in their wicked and abominable practices, they were deemed a holy people, called to a holy service, and made capable of performing it with acceptance.

It was to give them this capacity (in which consisted their distinguishing character),
that

that they were originally *sanctified*, in the sense above assigned to the word *ἁγιάζει*, here used by the Apostle. For nothing common or unclean can be acceptable to a pure and holy God; nor is any one qualified to be employed in his service, who does not possess such a purity and holiness as is suited to the nature of the service to which he is called. And since the Israelites, before their call, were not exempt from that pollution, which renders all mankind, in their natural state, unfit for communion with God, it pleased him to remove this unfitness, and, by a purification of the uncleanness which occasioned it, to prepare the chosen race for that holy service to which they were appointed. And for this purpose he ordained certain sacrifices, to the blood of which he annexed a cleansing and sanctifying influence; for, as the Apostle, speaking of this very subject, testifies, in the chapter before us, “almost all things are by “the law purged with blood^b,” purged from the uncleanness which naturally adheres to them, and made holy and meet for the service of God. Hence, at the original dedication of the covenant, Moses sprinkled all the

^b Heb. ix. 22.

people with the blood of the sacrifices offered upon that occasion*. By this ceremony they were purified, and incorporated as a religious body, and were made capable of approaching the presence of God, and of performing to him an acceptable service.

But the privilege, thus conferred, was not to continue for ever. It pleased God to make with his people only a temporary covenant, which he ordained should be renewed from year to year continually. And for this purpose he instituted a solemn festival, called the Day of Expiation; on every return of which he commanded that the whole congregation, with every thing appertaining to religious worship, should be purified, and, as it were, dedicated anew, by a re-consecration. And since individuals among the people were liable to contract occasional impurities, sufficient to exclude them from the Divine presence, provision was made for the purification of such excluded members, in order that they might be re-admitted to their religious privileges. The sacrifices referred to by the Apostle in the text, were expressly instituted for each of these occasions. There is ascribed

* Exod. xxiv. 8.

F

to

to them a sanctifying power; a power of cleansing from pollution, and of making meet for God's service. By "the blood of bulls and "of goats" the whole congregation, on the appointed festival, was cleansed and sanctified, and the covenant renewed and confirmed: the "ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean," removed occasional impurities, and restored the worshipper to those religious privileges, from which his uncleanness had excluded him.

The nature of the pollution, for which a remedy was thus provided by the law, is sufficiently declared by the Apostle, when he affirms, that the rites in question "sanctified to "the *purifying of the flesh*:" from which we may understand, that, under the old covenant, mere *external* uncleanness, which affected only the body of the worshipper, was sufficient to exclude him from the service of God, and must be removed before he could be restored to his religious privileges. This is evident from the law itself, which frequently, and indeed commonly, ordains purification, in cases where there is either no possibility of *moral* uncleanness, or no ground to impute it. Inanimate things are, undoubtedly, incapable
of

of moral uncleanness; yet these, as many of them as were appointed to any sacred office, were commanded to be cleansed and sanctified. Thus, at the dedication of the covenant, Moses sprinkled with blood not only the people, but also “ the Tabernacle, and all “ the vessels of the ministry ^d.” And at the consecration of Aaron and his family to the service of the Tabernacle, their *garments* were sanctified no less than their persons. “ And thou shalt take of the blood that is “ upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, “ and sprinkle it upon Aaron and upon his “ garments, and upon his sons, and upon the “ garments of his sons with him: and he “ shall be hallowed (in the Greek *ἁγιασθη-
σεται*), and his garments, and his sons, and “ his sons’ garments with him ^e.” And soon after, when Moses is directed to consecrate the *Altar*, the command to him is, “ And “ thou shalt offer every day a bullock for a “ sin-offering for atonement, and thou shalt “ *cleanse* the Altar when thou hast made an “ atonement for it (*ἐν τῷ ἁγιάζειν σε ἐπ’ αὐτῷ*). “ And thou shalt anoint it, to sanctify it (*ὥς ἐ
ἁγιάσαι αὐτό*) ^f.”

^d Heb. ix. 21.

^e Exod. xxix. 21.

^f Exod. xxix. 36.

And as the law thus ordains purification in cases where there is no capacity of moral uncleanness, so likewise cases may be adduced, in which, whatever the capacity may be, there is, nevertheless, no ground to impute it. The *leprosy*, for example, is a disease which no man willingly brings upon himself, and for which no man is justly chargeable with blame: and yet the leper was accounted unholy, and unfit to appear before God; and was accordingly separated from the congregation, and excluded from the worship of the Tabernacle. The same was also the effect of involuntary discharges of blood, and other impurities^e. And in each of these cases the law provided certain sacrifices and ceremonies, by which the diseased person, even after he was healed of his plague, was required to be cleansed, before he was permitted to appear before God in the assembly of his people^h.

The rites, with which our present subject is more immediately concerned, will be found, upon examination, to have no greater virtue or efficacy than those already mentioned. As to the burnt heifer, the matter

^e Lev. xiii. 45, 46. Num. v. 2. ^h Lev. xiv. 4.—xv. 31.

will not admit of dispute: for by referring to the law respecting this victim, we shall find that its ashes were never applied but for the purification of *external* uncleanness. If any man touched the body of one who had died a natural death¹, or even came into the tent where a dead body was lying²; or if he touched the body of one who had been slain with a sword in the open fields; or if he touched the bone of a man, or a grave³; in all these cases he was accounted unclean, and was purified by being sprinkled, in the manner above described, with the ashes of the burnt heifer⁴. And not only the man who touched the dead body, was unclean, but the tent also in which the dead body lay, and all the vessels, and every thing that was in the tent, were all unclean, and were purified by the same ceremony⁵.

It is evident, then, from the express language of the law itself respecting one of the victims here mentioned by the Apostle, that it was intended solely for the purification of external uncleanness. With respect to the sacrifices offered on the feast of expiation, it

¹ Num. xix. 11.² Num. xix. 14.³ Num. xix. 16.⁴ Num. xix. 17.⁵ Num. xix. 18.

may be thought, perhaps, at first view, that the law ascribes to them a much higher power: for we read that this solemn festival was instituted "to make an atonement for the children of Israel for *all* their sins^o." And among the ceremonies observed on this occasion, the High Priest was commanded to confess, over the scape goat, "*all* the iniquities of the children of Israel, and *all* their transgressions in *all* their sins^p;" which strong expressions, added to the solemnity of the whole proceeding, seem to intimate, that the end proposed by these sacrifices, was the expiation of somewhat more than mere external uncleanness. But this was not the case. For the virtue of this atonement was not confined to the persons of the Israelites, but was extended also to the Tabernacle, and to all the things employed in the service of God. For when the High Priest sprinkled the blood upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat, we read that the intention of this ceremony was to *make an atonement for the holy place^q*. And again, when having finished the ceremonies within the Tabernacle, he is commanded to go out unto the altar of burnt-offering, which

^o Lev. xvi. 34.

^p Lev. xvi. 21.

^q Lev. xvi. 16.

stood at the door of the Tabernacle, to sprinkle it also with blood, it is for the express purpose of *making an atonement for it*. And when the prescribed ceremonies are all ended, he is expressly said to have “made an end of reconciling the holy place, and the Tabernacle of the congregation, and the Altar.” But since the Tabernacle, and the vessels employed in the service of the Tabernacle, were none of them capable of *moral* guilt, but nevertheless needed expiation, whence the necessity of this expiation, unless to purify them from that *external* uncleanness which naturally adheres to all terrestrial things? And since it is no where said that the atonement made for the holy place differed, either in kind, or in the reasons of its establishment, from that which was made for the worshippers, does it not follow that the pollution was in both the same, and, consequently, that the end proposed by these sacrifices, was no other than the expiation of mere *external* uncleanness?

Nor let it be any objection, that the impurities, for which this expiation was provided, are expressly called *iniquities* and *sins*. For

Lev. xvi. 18.

Lev. xvi. 20.

these terms do not, in the language of the Old Testament, necessarily imply a deviation from *moral* rectitude, or a transgression of the *moral* law; but are frequently used, when nothing more can be understood than a privation of that bodily purity which the *cere-monial* law required. Thus we read of the *iniquity of the sanctuary*, which, it is said, the Priests shall bear¹. And Aaron is commanded to wear, as a fore-front to the mitre, upon his forehead a plate of gold, on which was engraven, HOLINESS TO THE LORD, that he “ may bear the *iniquity of the holy things*, “ which the children of Israel shall hallow in “ all their holy gifts².” Thus also the ashes of the burnt heifer, though applied only for the purification of external uncleanness, is nevertheless expressly called “ the ashes of the “ burnt heifer of purification for *sin*.” And again, when a man recovered from a leprosy, or other involuntary disease, which the law accounted unclean, he was required to offer for his cleansing a *sin-offering*³. Thus, free from blame as the unclean person must be esteemed in a moral point of view, in the eye

¹ Numb. xviii. 1.

² Exod. xxviii. 38.

³ Num. xix. 17.

⁴ Lev. xiv. 19.

of the law he was not guiltless: he was deemed a sinner; and one whose sin was of so polluting a nature, as to defile even the Tabernacle of the Most High. And he, who, being in a state of legal uncleanness, still presumed, regardless of the Divine ordinances, to join the congregation of God's people, and to approach the Divine presence, was accounted worthy of no less a punishment than death. "The man," says the law respecting the burnt heifer, "that shall be unclean, and shall not purify himself, that soul shall be cut off from the congregation; because he hath defiled the Tabernacle of the Lord; the water of separation hath not been sprinkled upon him; he is unclean."

And this power of the Levitical sacrifices to expiate only legal sins, is what the Apostle must be understood to mean, not only in the text, but also at the ninth verse of this chapter, where he virtually denies that they have any higher power; positively asserting, that "they could not make him that did the service, perfect, as pertaining to the conscience: *μη δυναμεναι κατα συνειδησιν τελειωσαι*

1 Num. xix. 20.

τον λατρευοντα” — of which passage, if we give to the word τελειωσαι the sense which, when used on similar occasions, it bears in the Septuagint version², the meaning will be, “ They could “ not *consecrate* the worshipper, or qualify him “ for the office of serving God, by purifying “ the conscience.” God had given to them no such power; nor were they in their own nature fitted for such a work; inasmuch as they consisted solely in external observances, and in rites with which the body, and not the conscience, of the worshipper, was concerned: or, to use the Apostle’s own language, “ they stood only in meats and drinks, “ and divers washings, and *carnal* ordinances, “ imposed on them until the time of reformation³;” until he who was the end of the law should come, and be the Mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises than was this of Moses.

² In the twenty-ninth chapter of Exodus, which prescribes the ceremonies to be observed in the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the Priest’s office, this word frequently occurs in the sense here assigned to it; and in this Epistle to the Hebrews, it is also once taken by our Translators in the same sense. “ For the law maketh men High “ Priests which have infirmity: but the word of the oath, “ which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is *consecrated* (τετελειωμενον) for evermore.” ch. vii. 28.

³ Heb. ix. 10.

It

It appears, then, as well from the law itself, as from the declaration of the Apostle, that the rites and sacrifices to which the text refers, were intended solely to cleanse the body of the worshipper from those impurities which, under the legal economy, disqualified him from performing to God an acceptable service; they “sanctified to the purifying of the flesh.” The Apostle next asserts the superior efficacy of Christ’s blood, to qualify for the service of God under the Christian dispensation. If the blood of the Levitical sacrifices, carried by the High Priest into the Holy of Holies, had the power here ascribed to it, of purifying the bodies of the Israelites, rendering them holy and meet for the service to which they were called, “how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?”

It is evident at first view, that *the blood of Christ*, in this latter part of the text, is made to correspond with *the blood of bulls and of goats*, mentioned in the former part. For these two are directly opposed to each other. “If the blood of bulls and of goats”

“goats”—“how much more the blood of “Christ?” And as on the feast of expiation the blood of the former was offered by the High Priest, who for that purpose entered with it through the vail into the inner Tabernacle, so^b Christ is said to have entered into heaven itself *with his own blood^b*, and, as the text expressly asserts, to have “offered “*himself* to God.” And this offering is further said to possess the general qualification required in all the legal offerings (and in those appointed for the feast of expiation among the rest), concerning which the law ordains, that they should be perfect in their kind, and without blemish^c: for Christ “offered himself *without spot* to God.” The spotless purity required in the legal victims as to their bodies, he possessed inwardly in his soul; “he did no sin, neither was guile “found in his mouth^d,” and is therefore not unaptly stiled by St. Peter a *lamb*, the emblem of purity and innocence; “a lamb “without blemish and without spot^e.”

It is also evident, that *internal* pollution, or those defilements of the conscience which

^b Heb. ix. 12, 24.

^c Lev. xxii. 20, 21.

^d 1 Pet. ii. 22.

^e 1 Pet. i. 19.

arise from sin in a *moral* sense, is here made to correspond with *external* pollution, or those bodily defilements which were occasioned by *legal* sin. And as the blood of the legal offerings had the power of cleansing the polluted *bodies* of the Israelites, and of purifying them from that uncleanness which excluded them from the Divine presence, so even in a greater degree (for the Apostle here argues from the less to the greater) has the blood of Christ the power of cleansing the polluted *consciences* of Believers, and of purifying them from the stain of those evil works, the wages, or natural desert of which, is death^f, or total exclusion, and everlasting destruction, from the presence of the Lord. “How much
“more shall the blood of Christ purge your
“*conscience* from dead works?”

It is further evident, that the *spiritual* worship and service of the Gospel is here made to correspond with the *carnal* ordinances, and outward observances of the law. And as the blood of the legal offerings sanctified the Israelites, and qualified them for the ceremonial worship of the Tabernacle, so the blood of Christ sanctifies the Christian Church, and qualifies the true Believer for communion

^f Rom. vi. 23.

with

with God, and for performing with acceptance that pure and spiritual service which is required of him. "How much more shall
" the blood of Christ purge your conscience
" from dead works, *to serve the living God?*"

And thus does the blood of Christ correspond, in all essential points, to the Levitical sacrifices for sin. It is expressly called an offering; is affirmed, like the legal offerings, to be perfect and without spot; and, like them also, to have the power of cleansing from pollution, and of qualifying for the service of God. In point of real worth and excellence, the legal offerings fell indeed infinitely short of the offering made by Christ. For the blood which was carried by the High Priest within the vail, though accepted by God, was after all but the blood of brute beasts, and therefore in itself of very little worth. Whereas Christ made, in the heavenly Sanctuary, an offering of his own blood, even the blood of the Son of God; an offering than which the whole extent of nature could not furnish one more valuable in itself, or more precious in the sight of God, of whose acceptance it was every way worthy.

And as the evangelical offering is thus
more

more valuable and excellent, so is its efficacy proportionably greater and more extensive. The legal offerings could only cleanse the bodies of the Israelites, polluted with legal sin: but the blood of Christ extends its cleansing influence even to the soul: it purges the conscience from dead works; from works for which the law was so far from providing an atonement, that it annexed to them the penalty of death: and consecrates the sinner to a pure and spiritual service; a service as far exceeding the ceremonial service of the Tabernacle, as the inward purity of heart and mind, required by the Gospel, exceeds the mere outward cleanliness of the body, which the law prescribes; and therefore more worthy in itself, and, when performed in sincerity, more acceptable to God, than the most rigid and exact compliance with all the precepts of the Jewish ritual.

The text, thus explained, applies most readily to the doctrine for which we are contending, and affords, if I mistake not, an incontrovertible argument in its support. This argument I know not how to set in a stronger point of view, than by a brief recapitulation of what has been offered.

We

We learn from the law, given to the descendants of Abraham, that by sin, in a *legal* sense, as it signifies that outward impurity which affects the body, the Israelites were accounted unclean, and unfit to appear before God in the assembly of his people. And we learn from the law of nature, no less than from the revealed will of God, that by sin in a *moral* sense, as it signifies that inward corruption of heart and life which affects the conscience, we are all unclean, and unfit for any communion with him, who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity. For the former of these sins the law provided a remedy, by appointing sacrifices, to the blood or ashes of which was annexed the power of purifying the flesh, and of restoring the unclean person to those religious privileges, from which his uncleanness had excluded him. The same, and even greater efficacy is by the Apostle ascribed to the blood of Christ, in purifying the conscience; in cleansing those who are defiled with moral guilt, and in removing that inability which cut them off from communion with God, and rendered them unfit for his service. “If,” says the Apostle, “the blood of bulls and of goats, “and the ashes of an heifer, sprinkling the
“unclean,

"unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of
 "the flesh; how much more shall the
 "blood of Christ, who through the eternal
 "Spirit offered himself without spot to
 "God, purge your conscience from dead
 "works to serve the living God?" Now
 since *atonement* was the acknowledged conse-
 quence of that cleansing influence which is
 here ascribed to these Levitical sacrifices for
 sin, who, after the parallel thus drawn by
 the Apostle, is prepared to assert, that the
 offering, which Christ is said to have made
 of himself to God, was not for atonement
 also?

Having now, in this and the preceding
 Discourse, laid before you what appears to me
 the most material part of that abundant
 evidence which the Scriptures afford, in sup-
 port of the first position which I undertook
 to prove, it may be of use in this place
 briefly to observe, by way of recapitulation,
 that the proofs of this position have been
 derived, first, from the positive declarations
 of Scripture, which ascribe to the blood of
 Christ the general effects and properties of a
propitiatory sacrifice: secondly, from the
 scriptural representations of his death, by
 which

which it is exhibited to us under the three following views—as a price, as a punishment, and as a sin-offering: thirdly, and chiefly, from that express comparison, with respect to this very point, which the Apostle to the Hebrews institutes between the Law and the Gospel. And from the whole it is, I trust, sufficiently manifest, that the sacred writers ascribe to the blood or death of Christ a power and influence, corresponding to that which, under the Old Testament, was attributed to the sacrifices for sin.

The next thing to be shewn, is, that the Scriptures ascribe to Christ himself an office and ministry, corresponding to that which was antiently discharged by the Levitical Priests in the Tabernacle erected by Moses. And this I shall make the subject of the next Discourse.

SERMON IV.

HEB. viii. 1, 2.

We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the Sanctuary, and of the true Tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

THE connection of the Law with the Gospel, and the end for which, considered as so connected, it was originally ordained, is virtually asserted by St Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians. "The law," says he, "was our schoolmaster, to bring us unto "Christ". By which we may understand that the legal dispensation was instituted for the times before the coming of our Lord, to

^a Gal. iii. 24.

prepare the people of God for the appearance of the promised Saviour, and to instruct them in the nature and design of his mission. This was its original end and designation: and in order to accomplish this end, it was so disposed by Divine wisdom, as to correspond, in all essential points, to that better dispensation, by which in the fulness of time it was to be succeeded, and of which it is expressly called the *type*, that is, the *pattern* or *model*.

Nor is the benefit yet ceased. For now, that this better dispensation is fully established, it no less serves for our instruction in the knowledge of Christ and his religion: and we may promise to ourselves no little assistance in elucidating any obscure or disputed point relating to the Gospel, by referring it (under the direction of the holy Scriptures) to its corresponding circumstance in the law. Of its use in this respect we have already had abundant experience: let us therefore, in the succeeding part of our enquiry, pursue the same method: and as we before shewed that the blood of Christ has a power and efficacy, corresponding to that which is attributed to the sacrifices for sin under the Old Testament; so let us now enquire, whether the Scriptures do not ascribe to Christ himself an office and ministry,

ministry, corresponding to that which was antiently discharged by the Levitical Priests in the Tabernacle erected by Moses.

Under the legal œconomy the priesthood was confined to the family of Aaron, which was taken from among the children of Israel, and appointed to stand before God in the holy place, and to minister unto him. The nature and design of their office may be learned from the Epistle to the Hebrews. “ Every “ High Priest,” says the Apostle, “ taken “ from among men, is ordained for men in “ things pertaining to God, that he may “ offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins ^b.” He is indeed, as we presently after read, “ called “ of God ^c,” deriving all his title, to perform the functions of his office, from Divine appointment: but “ he is ordained for men,” acting on their behalf, and for their benefit, “ in things pertaining to God;” performing the accustomed rites of religion, in order that he may propitiate God, and make reconciliation for sins. Now what the Apostle here asserts of the High Priest, of whom his subject led him particularly to speak, is equally

^b Heb. v. 1.

^c Heb. v. 4.

true of all the Priests. They were all "called of God," and were all appointed to "offer gifts and sacrifices for sins:" it may therefore be said of them all, that they were "ordained for men in things pertaining to God." And hence we infer in general, that the priesthood was instituted for the benefit of *men*, but that the Priest, in the execution of his office, had respect unto *God*, to whom his ministry was immediately addressed. A Priest, therefore, may be considered as the Mediator between God and men, or, as the Advocate of men with God, commending them and their concerns to the Divine favour and protection, and interceding for them, that, notwithstanding their sins and offences, God would not for ever cast them out of his favour, but would at length cease from his displeasure, and again be gracious unto them.

That interposition may in any case be attended with success, two qualifications are especially required in a Mediator: first, that he be acceptable to the person with whom he interposes; for without an interest of this kind, the interposition would be impertinent and presumptuous, and consequently unsuccessful: secondly, that he be seriously concerned for the welfare of those for whom he interposes;

interposes; otherwise, whatever his interest might be, it would be weakly and ineffectually exerted. In both these respects the legal Priests were duly qualified to interpose between God and his people. They were a holy race, called by God himself, and separated to their holy function by solemn rites of consecration: they were purified by ablutions and sacrifices, were sprinkled with the consecrating oil, and invested with hallowed garments; and were thus fitted and prepared to perform with acceptance that holy service to which they were called. And as the sanctity, thus impressed upon their character, rendered them acceptable Mediators to God, so their relation to the people, from among whom they were taken, engaged them to a faithful and earnest discharge of their ministry. They were all, both Priests and People, descended from one common stock, and were all included within the same covenant: and therefore the Priest had a real interest in the welfare of the People; and being, moreover, himself encompassed with infirmity, he was taught to pity and relieve the infirmities of his brethren.

The intercession of the Priest is necessarily implied in his offering for sin: and whoever

among the Israelites, on account of any sin or uncleanness, was excluded from the worship of the Tabernacle, could only recover the Divine favour through the intercession of the Priest, who was said on these occasions *to make atonement*; which he ordinarily did by appearing before God in the holy place, with the blood of the appointed victim. An offering of blood was not indeed so absolutely required, but that on particular occasions the law in this respect was relaxed; as in the case of extreme poverty, when the substitution of a less expensive offering was allowed^d. But on all occasions the ministry of the Priest was so indispensably necessary, that without it no atonement could be made. Hence atonement is usually ascribed to the act of the Priest; and if any man had committed any sin, or had contracted any uncleanness, for which the law had provided an atonement, he was commanded to take the appointed offering to the Priest; and “the Priest,” says the law, “shall make an atonement for him, “for his sin which he hath sinned, and it shall “be forgiven him^e ;” and again, in the case of an unclean person, “and the Priest shall

^d Lev. v. 11.

^e Lev. v. 10, 13.

“ make

“ make an atonement for him, and he shall
 “ be clean ^f.” So again on the feast of ex-
 piation, when an atonement was annually
 made for the Tabernacle, the Altar, and the
 whole Congregation, it was only by the mi-
 nistry of the High Priest, that the sanctifying
 power which the blood possessed, was applied,
 and, as it were, called forth into action ^g.
 And thus, as on the one hand the Priest could
 not ordinarily make atonement without an
 offering of blood; so neither, on the other,
 was the blood effectual, unless offered by the
 Priest: to his act the atonement is expressly
 ascribed; and only by his intercession was
 forgiveness to be obtained.

In like manner, under the Gospel-dispen-
 sation, forgiveness of sins, and our reconciliation
 to God, are ascribed to the intercession of Jesus
 Christ. He is expressly called our “ Advocate
 “ with the Father ^h ;” “ a High Priest over
 “ the house of God ⁱ ;” “ a minister of the”
 heavenly “ sanctuary, and of the true Taber-
 “ nacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”
 And this ministry he is said to have obtained,

^f Lev. xiv. 20.

^g Lev. xvi. 16, 33.

^h 1 John ii. 1.

ⁱ Heb. x. 21.

like the legal Priests, by the express appointment of God himself: for as under the law, "no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron; so also, Christ glorified not himself, to be made an High Priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my son, to-day have I begotten thee^k."

The qualifications, necessary to ensure success to the interposition of a mediator, are also ascribed to Christ. He is both acceptable to God, and compassionately affected towards men. The legal Priests derived their acceptableness from the sanctity of their character. In like manner the Apostle affirms, "that such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners^l." And, when spoken of in the character of our advocate with the Father, he is expressly called "Jesus Christ *the righteous*."^m And by this spotless purity, this holiness of soul and spirit, typified by the external sanctity of the legal Priests, he is eminently qualified to appear before God: and we are further assured, that his mediation is, in a peculiar manner, acceptable to his heavenly Fa-

^k Heb. v. 4, 5. ^l Heb. vii. 26. ^m 1 John ii. 1.

ther, who declared of him by a voice from heaven, " This is my beloved Son, in whom " I am well pleased ^a." To this acceptableness in the sight of God, the Apostle adds a compassionate regard for men, which he derived from having himself experienced the infirmities of our nature. " For we have not " an High Priest which cannot be touched " with the feeling of our infirmities ; but was " in all points tempted like as we are, yet " without sin ^o." " For verily he took not on " him the nature of angels, but he took on " him the seed of Abraham : wherefore in " all things it behoved him to be made like " unto his brethren ; that he might be a " merciful and faithful High Priest in things " pertaining to God, to make reconciliation " for the sins of the people. - For in that he " himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is " able to succour them that are tempted ^p."

And not only do the sacred writers ascribe to Christ the title and qualifications requisite for the priesthood, but also the peculiar functions of the office ; declaring, that in the heavenly sanctuary he made an offering to God, even an offering of himself, or of his

^a Matt. iii. 17. ^o Heb. iv. 15. ^p Heb. ii. 16, 17, 18.

own blood[†]: that he put away sin by the sacrifice of himself[†]: that he by himself purged our sins[†]: that he sanctified the people with his own blood[†]: that he appears for us in the presence of God[‡]: that he is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us[‡]: all of them acts purely sacerdotal, and which cannot be ascribed to Christ in any but the priestly character.

But the truth of our general position will more fully appear, by attending to the parallel which the Apostle, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, draws between the Law and the Gospel. For this parallel is not confined to the corresponding circumstances, with respect to which it has been already considered; viz. the blood of Christ, and that of the legal sacrifices offered by the High Priest on the feast of expiation; but is extended also to Christ and the High Priest considered personally, between whom a correspondence, no less exact, is expressly maintained.

Of all the Priests who officiated in the Tabernacle, the High Priest, as his name

[†] Heb. ix. 12, 14.

[†] Heb. i. 3.

[‡] Heb. ix. 24.

[†] Heb. ix. 26.

[†] Heb. xiii. 12.

[‡] Rom. viii. 34.

imports,

imports, was the chief. He was selected from among the first-born, and was initiated by the solemn ceremony of anointing. To his character and office a peculiar holiness was annexed; and to his administration was committed that most sacred rite, by which the covenant was annually renewed and confirmed: for to him it exclusively belonged to offer for sin on the feast of expiation; and thus, while the ministry of the inferior Priests was confined to the sanctuary, or outer Tabernacle, he was permitted to enter within the vail into the Holy of Holies, or inner Tabernacle: and his ministry in this most holy place is expressly said to prefigure the ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary, that "true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man."

Under the legal economy there was a double oblation of the victims intended for atonement. Of these the first took place while the victim was yet alive; and was made by the presentation of the animal itself at the door of the Tabernacle. But by this oblation no atonement was made: it was preparatory merely to that second and grand oblation, which took place within the Tabernacle, after the blood of the victim was shed.

On

On the feast of expiation, the first oblation was made by the High Priest, who presented the victims, selected for this occasion, before the Lord at the door of the Tabernacle, setting them apart by this ceremony, and *sanctifying*, or consecrating them to that holy service for which they were appointed. Corresponding to this oblation was our Saviour Christ's voluntary resignation of himself to that painful and ignominious death which he suffered for our sake; in reference to which he says of himself, in that prayer of his recorded by St. John, which he addressed to God immediately before his passion, that he *sanctified himself* for his Disciples^x: that is, as Commentators observe, that he offered himself to God as a peculiar victim^y. Agreeably to which St Paul asserts, that he "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross^z:" and in another place more expressly, he "gave himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God^a."

The second oblation (with which we are principally concerned in the present argument) was made in the inner Tabernacle,

^x John xvii. 19.

^y Vid. Whitby in loc.

^z Phil. ii. 8.

^a Eph. v. 2.

into

into which the High Priest, on this feast of expiation, and never on any other occasion, entered alone through the vail with the blood of the appointed sacrifices; which he there offered, by sprinkling it with his finger, upon and before the mercy-seat^b. The inner Tabernacle was the place in which God was said to dwell; for there his glory was visibly displayed, from between the two cherubims which overshadowed the mercy-seat^c; and is therefore an apt representation of heaven, the brightest habitation of God's holiness and glory, into which Christ, as the Apostle assures us, is now entered with his own blood; and that for the express purpose, as the Apostle further assures us, of offering it to God^d.

But not only does the Apostle assign to Christ, for the discharge of his ministry, a place corresponding to that of which the High Priest was exclusively the minister; he further ascribes to the ministry of each, in his respective place, a corresponding effect.

In speaking of the feast of expiation, I have already, in a former discourse^e, had oc-

^b Lev. xvi. 14, 15.

^c Exod. xxv. 8, 22. Pl. lxxx. 1.

^d Heb. ix. 12, 14.

^e Serm. III.

casion to consider the reasons of its establishment, and the efficacy of that blood, which the High Priest was accustomed to offer in the Holy of Holies. It will therefore be sufficient in this place briefly to observe, that, at the original dedication of the covenant, when the Israelites were first incorporated as a religious body, it pleased God to consecrate them, and separate them to his service, by ordaining, that they, and every thing to be employed in religious worship, should be purged with blood. And, as he was pleased to make with them only a temporary covenant, he further thought fit to ordain an annual repetition of this ceremonial of consecration: and for this purpose he instituted the feast of expiation; on every return of which he commanded that the whole congregation, with every thing appertaining to religious worship, should be purified, and, as it were, consecrated anew: which was accordingly done, by the offering of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies. From all which it appears, that the effect, produced by the ministry of the High Priest, was nothing less than the consecration of the whole legal economy for the ensuing year; the purification of the Tabernacle, that it might be a fit residence for the Deity; and the

the sanctification of the people, that they might be qualified for the holy service to which they were called.

In like manner the Christian Church was sanctified and prepared, by the offering of the blood of Christ. "It was necessary," says the Apostle, "that *the patterns of things in the heavens* should be purified with these" sacrifices of beasts, "but the *heavenly things themselves* with better sacrifices than these;" even with the sacrifice of Christ himself. And again, speaking of the offering which Christ made of himself in heaven, he declares, that by this offering he "*perfected* them that are "*sanctified*;" he perfected; in the original *τετελειωκεν*, he *consecrated* or *dedicated*; for such, as I have already observed^a, is the meaning of the word, when used on similar occasions, in the Septuagint version: and that it can have no other meaning in this passage, is evident from the whole scope of the Apostle's argument, which manifestly requires that the same effect should be ascribed to the offering of Christ in heaven, which the offering of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies was appointed to produce; and that, unquestionably,

^f Heb. ix. 23. ^g Heb. x. 14. ^h Serm. III. p. 74.

is, the *consecration* of those who partake of its salutary influence.

And as, by the ministry of the High Priest, the Israelites were qualified for the worship of the Tabernacle, so likewise, through the offering made by Jesus Christ, we obtain permission to approach the presence of God, and to serve him with acceptance. St. Paul assures us, that through Christ “ we have *access* unto “ the Father¹;” and again, that in him “ we “ have boldness, and *access* with confidence².” and in this Epistle to the Hebrews, the consideration that “ we have a great High Priest, “ that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son “ of God,” is held out as an encouragement to us to “ *come boldly to the throne of grace*¹.” And again in the tenth chapter, the Apostle, at the conclusion of his discourse upon the Priesthood of Christ, and the benefits which we derive from it, exhorts us to “ *draw near “ with a true heart, in full assurance of faith*^m.” From all which it is manifest that Jesus Christ is, to us, under the Gospel, what the High Priest was to the Israelites of old. By his office and ministry in the heavenly Taber-

¹ Eph. ii. 18.

² Eph. iii. 12.

¹ Heb. iv. 14, 16.

^m Heb. x. 22.

nacle, he sanctified and consecrated the whole Christian Church, and hath obtained for all the members of it the glorious privilege of access to God.

But while, upon the authority of the Apostle, we thus maintain a correspondence between Christ, in his priestly character, and the legal High Priest, let us not forget that the chief design of this Epistle to the Hebrews, is to shew that the ministry which Christ hath obtained, is more excellent than that to which they were called who served the Tabernacle. Accordingly, in the course of this Epistle we find enumerated a variety of circumstances, in which this superior excellency consists. By following the Apostle in this part of his argument, while we confirm the point concerning which we are more immediately enquiring, we shall at the same time acquire a more distinct view of the whole doctrine under consideration, and be able to ascertain, with greater clearness, the nature of those benefits which our great High Priest hath obtained for us.

Now one circumstance, upon which is founded the superior excellency of Christ's

priesthood above that of the legal Priests, is, *the continuance and unchangeableness of his office.* "Thou," says the Apostle, applying to our Lord the words of the royal Prophet, in the hundred and tenth Psalm, "thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedeck". The law making men High Priests which had infirmity^o, there was of necessity a perpetual change of the person who filled the office. "They," that is, the High Priests of the order of Aaron, "were not suffered to continue, by reason of death^p:" consequently they were many in number, succeeding each other in a continued series, till at length the whole order was changed and abolished, by the establishment of that priesthood which it typified and prefigured^q. But the priesthood of our Lord is without succession or change: he is in reality what Melchisedeck, from the silence of the Scriptures respecting him, is said to be, "a Priest for ever." With respect to Melchisedeck, we read of no Priest who went before him in the order to which he belonged, nor of any by whom he was succeeded. In his priesthood he stands singly and alone; nor

^a Heb. vii. 17.^o Heb. vii. 28.^p Heb. vii. 23.^q Heb. vii. 11, 12.

is any thing recorded respecting his genealogy or family, his parentage or birth, his admission to the priesthood, or his removal from it by death; on which account he is said by the Apostle to be “without father, without mother, and without descent;” to have “neither beginning of days, nor end of life,” but to abide “a Priest continually.” In like manner the priesthood of our Lord is unchangeable, and without end. He is “a Priest for ever,” and will throughout all ages continue to exercise his ministry for the benefit of that Church, which he hath purchased with his own blood; and having an unchangeable priesthood, “he is able to save them to the uttermost, that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”

Another circumstance, on account of which the priesthood of our Lord is more excellent than that of the sons of Aaron, is, *the superior efficacy of his ministry*. By a *single* offering he consecrated at once, and for ever, his whole Church, so as to include not only the individual members of whom it was then composed,

* Heb. vii. 3.

* Heb. vii. 24, 25.

but likewise all who should, in after times, be ingrafted into it by baptism: or, to use the words of the Apostle, “ by *one* offering he hath perfected *for ever* them that are sanctified.” But this the legal High Priests could not do. “ The law,” says the Apostle, “ having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never, with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually, make the comers thereunto perfect:” or rather, as the passage should be translated, “ cannot, with those sacrifices which they offer *year by year*, make perfect *for ever*,” that is, consecrate for ever, “ those who come unto God,” viz. the worshippers of the Tabernacle. And the insufficiency of the legal economy in this respect, the Apostle proceeds to argue from the continual repetition of these sacrifices. “ For then would they not have ceased to be offered?” Yes, verily: for to what purpose should that be repeated, which has already answered the end proposed? Whence the necessity of an annual purifica-

Heb. x. 14.

“ Σκια γὰρ ἔχει ὁ νόμος τῶν μέλλόντων ἀγαθῶν, ἡκ αὐτῇ τῇ ἐκείνῃ τῶν πραγμάτων, κατ’ ἑαυτοῦ τὰς αὐταῖς θυσίαις, ὡς προσφύουσιν, εἰς τὸ διηκτικῆς ὑπὸ πᾶσι δύναται τῆς προσερχομένης τιλῆσθαι. Heb. x. 1.

tion,

tion, if the worshippers, by *one* offering, had been consecrated *for ever*? And of this the worshippers themselves would not have been ignorant: because that being “once purged,” or, rather, being *completely* purged by *one* offering”, they would “have had no more conscience of sins;” they would not have been conscious that any further offering was necessary to cleanse and prepare them for the worship of God. But, on the other hand, they well knew that their peculiar privileges were not conferred by a perpetual gift, but were granted only for a year; at the expiration of which their covenant would be void, unless renewed in the appointed manner; and they themselves would revert to their original incapacity of approaching the Divine presence, unless qualified afresh by a re consecration. And therefore in these legal sacrifices there was “a remembrance again made of sins every year.

“ ἀπαξ και ἀδαμνως—The Apostle in another place uses a similar expression, “Who needeth not daily, as those High Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people’s; for this he did *once*, when he offered up himself.” “Semel, ἀπαξ. Magna est hoc in loco, et aliis deinceps pluribus, hujus adverbii emphasis. Significat enim quod semel factum est, ita absolutum fuisse, ut repetere nullo modo sit necesse.” Beza: Annot. in Heb. vii. 27.

" For it is not possible that the blood of bulls
 " and of goats should take away sins^x;" that
 is, should take them away completely and for
 ever. It had no such power in its own na-
 ture, nor had it received any such from the
 appointment of God. But what the legal
 offerings could only do by an *annual repetition*,
 Christ, by *one* offering, effected *for ever*.
 " By his own blood he entered in *once* into
 " the holy place, having obtained *eternal* re-
 " demption for us^y." " For Christ is not
 " entered into the holy places made with
 " hands," into the earthly Tabernacle erected
 by Moses, " but into heaven itself, now to
 " appear in the presence of God for us; nor
 " yet that he should offer himself *often*, as
 " the High Priest entereth into the holy
 " place, *every year* with blood of others: (for
 " then must he often have suffered since the
 " foundation of the world) but now *once*
 " in the end of the world, hath he appeared
 " to put away sin by the sacrifice of him-
 " self^z." " And every Priest standeth *daily*
 " (that is, on every day of expiation^a),
 " ministering

^x Heb. x. 1—4. ^y Heb. ix. 12. ^z Heb. ix. 24—26.

^a Commentators, in general, understand the Apostle to speak in this place either of the daily sacrifice, properly so called,

“ ministering and offering oftentimes the
 “ same sacrifices, which can never take away
 “ sins ;

called, or of those occasional sacrifices for sin, for the offering of which, among other things, the Priests, in the order of their courses, attended *daily* in the sanctuary. But I am rather of opinion that he continues to discourse of the *annual* sacrifice, offered by the High Priest in the Holy of Holies ; with which, in the beginning of this chapter, he had compared the offering of Christ. And in this I join with Socinus, who observes, that the expression *daily* does not here signify *on every day*, but *at a certain stated time continually*. And in support of this observation, he refers us to chap. vii. 27. where the Apostle uses this very expression in the same sense. “ Who needeth not *daily*, as those High
 “ Priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and
 “ then for the people’s.” “ Quotidie dicit; cum tamen
 “ id fieret a Sacerdotibus semel tantum quotannis. Nusquam
 “ enim legitur, summum Sacerdotem in sacrificiis, quæ pro
 “ populo fiebant, pro se etiam offerre debuisse, nisi in sacrificio illo anniversario.” De Servatore, par. ii. cap. xvi.

Grotius, in contending for the common interpretation, thus opposes the argument of Socinus. “ Sic et cap. x. 11.
 “ quotidiana sacrificia cum Christi sacrificio comparantur:
 “ cujus loci sententiam evertit Socinus *quotidie* exponens
 “ *quotannis*, nullo exemplo. Nam quod locum Heb. vii.
 “ 27. adfert huic interpretationi firmandæ, frustra est, cum
 “ falso sumat Sacerdotem in solo anniversario sacrificio pro
 “ se offerre debuisse. Contra enim pro se offerre debuit,
 “ quoties peccati sibi erat conscius. Lev. iv. 3.” De Satisfactione Christi, cap. x.

The reply of Crellius is as follows : “ In loco citato,
 “ cap. x. de sacrificio anniversario sermonem esse, satis do-
 “ cere

“fins;” or, which can by no means take away sins for ever. “But this man, after
“he

“cere possunt ea, quæ ab ipso capitis initio leguntur; unde
“cætera, quæ hoc loco dicuntur, pendere, præter rem ip-
“sam, Beza in sua versione ostendit. Institutam enim
“esse a divino auctore collationem inter solenne sacrifi-
“cium expiatorium, et sacrificium Christi, vers. 1. et 3.
“aperte comprobant. Particulam illam καὶ ἑπομένως non
“simpliciter explicat Socinus per vocem *quotannis*, sed
“certo quodam tempore *perpetuo*, ut eo loco, quem Grotius
“citavit, videre est, h. e. certo quodam die *quotannis*. Hoc
“vero nec sine exemplo fecit Socinus, nec, si exemplum
“deesset, protinus repudiari deberet, cum rationem hujus
“sue interpretationis attulerit, quod de anniversario sacri-
“ficio hucusque institutus esset sermo, quod veram obla-
“tionis Christi umbram fuisse antea docuerat. Quod ad
“locum cap. vii. 27. attinet, in quo exemplum ejus signi-
“ficationis extare Socinus statuit, non dicit Socinus, sum-
“mum Sacerdotem *in solo anniversario sacrificio* pro se of-
“ferre debuisse; sed ita scribit: *Nusquam legitur summum*
“*Sacerdotem in sacrificiis, quæ pro populo fiebant, pro se*
“*etiam offerre debuisse, nisi in sacrificio illo anniversario.*
“In sacrificiis igitur quæ *pro populo fiebant*, debuisse pro
“se etiam offerre summum Sacerdotem, nisi in illo anni-
“versario, nusquam legi scribit Socinus: non vero, eum
“pro se separatim offerre non debuisse, cum sibi delicti
“alicujus esset conscius. Id autem rectissime urget Soci-
“nus, quia Auctor D. loco d. cap. vii. manifeste facit
“mentionem sacrificii, quod pro populo fieret, in quo Sa-
“cerdos prius pro se, tum demum pro populo offerre debu-
“erit. Ita enim ait: *Qui (Pontifex noster Christus) non*
“*habet quotidie necesse, quemadmodum illi Pontifices, prius*
“pro

“ he had offered one sacrifice for sin, for ever
 “ sat down on the right hand of God ;
 “ from henceforth expecting till his enemies
 “ be made his footstool. For by one offer-
 “ ing he hath perfected for ever them that
 “ are sanctified ^b.” From all which we may
 collect, that Christ, having once entered into
 the heavenly Tabernacle, abideth there con-
 tinually, and by his prevailing intercession ob-
 tains for his Church the continued enjoy-
 ment of that glorious privilege, which he pur-
 chased with his blood.

“ *pro propriis peccatis victimas offerre, deinde (pro pecca-*
 “ *tis) populi. Hoc enim fecit semel cum seipsum obtulit.*
 “ Adde quod ne sic quidem, si Grotium sequamur, Sacer-
 “ dos quotidie offerre debuerit, non magis quam alius qui-
 “ vis e populo. Neque enim quotidie peccati alicujus sibi
 “ erat conscius, pro quo offerre deberet, alias idem de quo-
 “ libet Israelita dicendum esset. Quapropter rectissime
 “ statuit Socinus de anniversario sacrificio ibi esse sermo-
 “ nem, ac proinde vocem *quotidie* ita interpretandam esse,
 “ ac si dictum esset, certo quodam die quotannis.” Re-
 sponso ad lib. H. Grotii de Satisfac. cap. x.

On the same side I may cite the authority of Dr. Ham-
 mond, who renders *καθ' ἡμέραν*, upon a day, i. e. as he main-
 tains in his Paraphrase, upon the day of expiation.

It may be added, in further support of this interpretation,
 that some MSS of note read *Και πας μὲν ἀρχιερεὺς ἑκάστῃ καθ'*
ἡμέραν, &c. and every High Priest standeth daily, &c. (see
 Wetsten) which reading is adopted by Grotius.

^b Heb. x. 11—14.

The ministry which Christ hath obtained is also more excellent than that of the Priests who served the Tabernacle; “by how much” he is the Mediator of a better covenant; “which was established upon better promises.” He is the Mediator of a better covenant; a covenant which admits us to a nearer and more intimate communion with God, and to the participation of greater and more important benefits. The Israelites were indeed admitted into the presence of God; but they approached him with fear and trembling; and, though he condescended to be called their God, he ruled them with the severity of an avenging Judge, rather than with the kindness of a compassionate Parent. But to us he appears in a milder character: we have not received the spirit of bondage unto fear; but we have received the spirit of adoption: God hath taken us into his family, and hath permitted us to approach him with the tender appellation of Father^d. The throne of the great King is no longer surrounded with the tremendous ensigns of terrible majesty; but is a throne of grace, to which in all our sins, and all our wants, we may boldly

^c Heb. viii. 6.

^d Rom. viii. 15,

apply,

apply, in the fullest confidence of being heard, forgiven, and relieved. "Let us," says the Apostle, "come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

And as the covenant is thus better, so are the promises better upon which it was established. Through Christ we have not only access to God in the Church militant here upon earth, but we are encouraged to hope for nearer approaches to the Divine presence hereafter, in the Church triumphant in heaven. And, in this respect, the privilege conferred upon the Christian Church infinitely exceeds all that the Israelites enjoyed through the ministry of their High Priest. The promises made to them were wholly of a temporal nature; and the utmost which their covenant taught them to expect, was the possession, in peace and prosperity, of that good land, which God had promised to their fathers. But to the Christian Church the promises run in a higher strain: we look for a better country than was that of Canaan; even an heavenly one: and are taught to expect, not so much temporal peace and prosperity, as the enjoyment of that everlasting rest,

* Heb. iv. 16.

which

which remaineth to the people of God^f. We have "boldness to enter into the holiest by "the blood of Jesus^g:" into heaven itself, which he hath opened to all Believers; and whither he, as our forerunner, is already gone, to prepare for us mansions of bliss and glory in his father's house; and whence, agreeably to his own promise, he will come again, and receive us to himself, that where he is, there we may be also^h.

Such is the glorious privilege of the Christian Church. We have access to God, and the capacity of performing to him an acceptable service in this life; and we have the sure and certain hope of being admitted to the everlasting enjoyment of him in the life to come. Nor let any sincere Believer despair of obtaining, through the intercession of his Saviour, the actual possession of that immortal happiness, to which the privilege, enjoyed by the Church upon earth, is merely preparatory. Is he alarmed by a sense of his own corruption, and a dread of the Divine vengeance? Let him remember, that in heaven Jesus Christ, the High Priest of our profession, continually appears for us in the presence of God; where he undertakes our cause, in-

^f Heb. iv. 9.^g Heb. x. 19.^h John xiv. 2, 3.
terposes

terposes in our behalf, and obtains for us pardon of our sins, and peace with God. "If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous¹:" and so prevailing is the intercession of our heavenly Advocate, that St. Paul boldly defies all the enemies of our salvation to oppose its influence. "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us²." And in this Epistle to the Hebrews, the intercession of our Redeemer is made the ground of our hope and confidence in him. "Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them³."

The truth of the general position, which I undertook to prove in this Discourse, is, I trust, by this time sufficiently manifest. We have seen that the Scriptures contain many general assertions of our Lord's priestly cha-

¹ 1 John ii. 1.

² Rom. viii. 33.

³ Heb. vii. 25.

racter,

racter, ascribing to him both the title of Priest, and also the peculiar functions of the priesthood: and that, in speaking of his priesthood, they contain particular references to the legal High Priest, and to the functions discharged by him on the feast of expiation; expressly declaring, that as the High Priest offered the blood of the bullock and the goat in that holy place upon earth, where God vouchsafed a visible manifestation of his glorious presence, and by his offering sanctified the Israelites, and gave them a title to the temporal blessings of their covenant; so Christ offered his own blood in heaven itself, where the Divine glory shines forth in the fulness of its splendor, that by his offering he might sanctify his Church, and make us capable of attaining those spiritual and eternal promises, held out to us in the Gospel: and from the whole we hesitate not to infer, that an office and ministry is attributed to our blessed Lord in heaven, corresponding to that which was antiently discharged by the Levitical Priests in the earthly Tabernacle.

And here I shall beg leave to close the Scripture-evidence, by which the doctrine of Atonement is supported: and have accordingly

ingly now completed what I have to offer upon the first of the two general heads, into which, at the commencement of these Discourses, I distributed my subject.

Under the second general head, I proposed to consider the principal objections, which the Opponents of this doctrine, and especially the Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity, have urged against it. These objections may also be reduced to two heads, according as the intention of our adversaries is, either to invalidate the scriptural proofs of the doctrine in question, by attributing to the sacred writers a sense, different from that for which we contend ; or, secondly, to oppose the doctrine in a more direct and positive manner, by shewing that it makes no part of that scheme of religion which is delivered to us in the Scriptures.

I shall begin with the objections of the former class ; and shall accordingly, in the next Discourse, endeavour to vindicate the sacred text from the attempts which have been made, by Socinian writers, to pervert its meaning.

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S E R M O N V.

I COR. xiii. 12.

Now we see through a glass, darkly.

IN the preceding Lectures it has been my endeavour to shew, that the doctrine of Atonement, by the blood of Christ, is contained in the Scriptures : and in proof of this position, I have collected from the various books of Scripture a multitude of passages, forming altogether a body of evidence so uniform and consistent, and so decisive of the point in question, as apparently to leave not the least room for cavil or dispute.

But it not uncommonly happens, that the greatest discord prevails, where the most perfect harmony might have been expected. The passions and prejudices of men close their eyes against the clearest light, and make them eager to dispute against the plainest and most

evident truths ; nor is there any truth, however plain and evident, which a sophist will not contrive to bring into question. And thus it has happened in the case before us. To the doctrine of Atonement, the testimony borne by the word of God, is, as we have seen, most full and express. And yet, notwithstanding this testimony, we find a determined Adversary hardy enough to come forward with the professed intention of shewing, that the whole doctrine is of human invention, and has no countenance whatever in the Scriptures^a. In vain do we oppose to this bold assertion, the many positive declarations with which the books of Scripture abound. He cannot indeed deny the existence of these declarations ; but he contrives to elude their force, and by sophistical expositions to render them less adverse to the opinions of his sect.

In the following Discourse, I propose to consider the general method of interpretation employed for this purpose ; and shall endeavour to shew, that it is adopted on the present occasion without authority, and in direct opposition to the manifest intention of the sacred Writers.

^a Hist. of Cor, vol. i. p. 153.

Among the passages of Scripture adduced to prove the doctrine of Atonement, we depend with peculiar confidence upon those, which denominate the death of Christ *a sacrifice* and *a sin-offering*, and which assert of his blood, that it is our *ransom*, and the *price of our redemption*. And it must be owned, that the obvious sense of all such expressions is so strongly in favour of this doctrine, that at first view one would think it extremely difficult, if not utterly impossible, by any means to evade their force. But, great as the difficulty appears, a Socinian readily surmounts it, by the bare assumption, that the language of Scripture is, on such occasions, merely *figurative*. Thus the Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity admits, without hesitation, that the death of Christ is called in Scripture *a sacrifice* and *a sin-offering*: but then he affirms, that these, and such like expressions, are to be *figuratively* interpreted; and that, being so interpreted, they do not oblige us to believe that Christ died a sacrifice in any other manner, than as any person may be said to be a sacrifice to the cause in which he dies^b. “ In every sacrifice,” says he, “ the victim is

^b Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 278.

“ slain for the benefit of the person on whose
 “ account it is offered; so Christ, dying to pro-
 “ cure the greatest possible benefit to the hu-
 “ man race, is said to have given his life *a sa-*
 “ *crifice* for us: and moreover, as the end of
 “ the Gospel is to promote the reformation of
 “ sinners, in order to procure the pardon of
 “ sin, the death of Christ is more expressly
 “ compared to *a sin-offering* ^b.” And he con-
 tends, that these points of resemblance be-
 tween the death of Christ and the Jewish sa-
 crifices, sufficiently justify and explain the lan-
 guage of the Scriptures relating to it, without
 supposing that the sacrifices, prescribed in the
 Jewish law, are *types* of Christ’s sacrifice, or
 ascribing to the death of Christ any *immediate*
 power of making expiation for sin, and of
 procuring pardon. And speaking of Isaiah’s
 prophecy, “ Thou shalt make his soul an of-
 “ fering for sin ^c,” he affirms, that, even al-
 lowing the propriety of our translation, “ it
 “ cannot be proved to exhibit any thing more
 “ than *a figurative allusion* ^d.” So again, he
 admits that Christ is said to have given his
 life *a ransom* for us: he nevertheless denies
 that we derive any benefit *immediately* from

^b Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 182.

^c Is. liii. 10.

^d Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 184.

his death; nor will he allow us to consider the giving of his life as a *real* price paid for our deliverance from death; but he asserts, that this expression is *figuratively* applied to Christ, because he died in consequence of having voluntarily, and for the love which he bore to us, undertaken the work of our salvation^e. And in another place he affirms, that the death of Christ may be called *a sacrifice for sin*, and *a ransom*; and also that Christ may, in a general way, be said to have *died in our stead*, and to have *borne our sins*: and that *figurative* language, even stronger than this, may be used by persons, who do not consider the death of Christ as having any immediate relation to the forgiveness of sins; but believe only, that it was a necessary circumstance in the scheme of the Gospel, and that this scheme was necessary to reform the world^f. And thus, by this pretence of *a figure*, he endeavours, most unwarrantably, to evade the true sense of Scripture, and to set aside as insignificant, and without force, the plainest and most positive texts, against which, if fairly interpreted, his favourite hypothesis could not be maintained.

It will assist us in our investigation of this

^e Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 202.

^f Ibid. p. 214.

method of interpretation, by which the sense of Scripture is thus evaded, and explained away, if we first ascertain what our Historian understands by *figurative language*.

From the foregoing quotations it appears, that the *figurative* sense of an expression is opposed to its *literal* and *proper* sense; and that an expression becomes *figurative*, when it is transferred from the thing of which it is *properly* significant, to some other thing, on account of some resemblance which they bear, or are supposed to bear, to each other. Thus, by way of example, a *lion* is properly an animal, whose characteristic quality is courage. But a man, who possesses this quality in an eminent degree, so far resembles a lion, and is figuratively called by that name. Thus also *thirst* is properly a painful sensation, arising from a dryness of the throat, and occasioning an eager desire of drink. But there is in a *dry soil* an aptness to receive moisture with facility, somewhat resembling that eagerness for drink, which characterizes a thirsty animal; and therefore a *dry land* is figuratively called a *thirsty land*. Thus again, a victim devoted to death, and actually slain, and offered to God, in order to procure for the offerer the Divine favour and acceptance, is properly

properly a *sacrifice*: but the man who, in order to attain any end, exposes himself to such danger, that his death is the inevitable consequence, bears some resemblance to the former, and may therefore figuratively be called a *sacrifice* to the cause in which he dies.

And hence it further appears, that the signification of figurative language does not arise from *the real nature of the thing to which it is transferred*, but only from *the imagination of him who transfers it*: and accordingly it does not express what is *true and real* in the thing itself; but is applied by way of *allusion* merely; for the sake perhaps of a rhetorical flourish, and in order to express a thing in a more striking and forcible manner. Thus the *real* nature of a lion belongs not to a courageous man: but because the quality which principally characterizes the former animal, exists in an eminent degree in the latter, therefore the imagination conceives them to be, what they really are not, partakers of one common nature, and applies to them one common name. Thus also in a dry land there is only an *imaginary* thirst: there is *really* no eagerness, no desire whatever; only its aptness to receive moisture with facility, is conceived

conceived by the imagination to be of the same kind with that eager desire of drink which is properly *thirst*, and is therefore called by the same name. So also in the giving up of one's life for the support of any cause, the oblation, on account of which it is called a sacrifice, is not *real*, but *imaginary*: there is a mere exposure of a man's life to danger, and it may be to inevitable loss, which the imagination conceives to be of the same kind with that oblation which is necessary to a proper sacrifice; and therefore the life so exposed and lost, is also said to be *sacrificed*.

It is the opinion of this Author, that language, if it cannot be *literally* interpreted, is necessarily of the *figurative* kind here described, applied only by way of *allusion*; and not to express any *truth* or *reality*. And accordingly he argues, that where the words of Scripture will not admit of a literal sense (as on some occasions they undeniably will not), we must then have recourse to a figure. But this is a mistake. For there is a species of language, usually called *analogical*; which, though not strictly *proper*, is far from being merely *figurative*: since in this case the name of one thing is transferred to another, on account, not of an *imaginary resemblance*, but of
a real

a *real correspondence*: or, in other words, the translation is made, not because *the things themselves* are similar, but because they are in similar *relations*. For, agreeably to the definition of the Mathematicians, *analogy* is the similitude of relations: and is said to take place, when the first of four magnitudes has the same ratio, or relation, to the second, which the third has to the fourth. Now *analogical* language arises from a similitude of this kind. For when there subsists between two things the same relation as between some other two, then, on account of this analogy, the name which properly belongs to one of the terms in one relation, is frequently transferred to its corresponding term in the other relation; and is as truly significant of the *real* nature of the thing in the relation in which it stands, as it could be were it the primitive and proper word.

Permit me to illustrate my meaning by an example.—Our blessed Lord is called in Scripture the *head* of the Church*. Now the term *head* is not here to be understood in a strictly *literal* and *proper* sense: for literally and properly the *head* is the uppermost and

* Eph. v. 23.

principal part of an animal; the organ of sensation; and the source from which all the other parts derive motion, and the power of performing their respective functions. Nor is it merely *figurative*, significant of nothing real, but applied only by way of allusion. It is *analogical*: for between Christ and his Church there is the same relation, as between the head and the body: and since what a literal and proper head is to the animal frame, that Christ is to his Church; therefore, on account of this analogy, he is called the *head* of his Church: and the office which he sustains with respect to his Church, is as truly expressed by this *analogical* term, as it would be by any *proper* word which could have been employed. The Church is in like manner, and on the same account, called the *body of Christ*, that is, the body of which Christ is the head. And not only so, but because Christians are to the Church, what members are to the body, the individuals who compose the Church, are further called *members* of Christ's body^h.

It will be found, upon examination, that all languages are full of these *analogical* terms.

^h 1 Cor. xii. 27.

Even

Even *sensible* objects are not unfrequently denominated by words borrowed from other sensible objects, with which we are better acquainted, or more immediately concerned. Thus the term *foot* properly signifies the lower extremity of an *animal*, or that on which the animal stands. But because the lower extremity or base of a *mountain*, is to the mountain what the *foot* is to an animal, it is therefore called by the same name: and the term, thus applied, is significant of something *real*; something, which, if not a foot in strict propriety of speech, is nevertheless truly so, considered with respect to the circumstance upon which the analogy is founded.

But this mode of expression is more common with respect to our *mental* and *intellectual* faculties and operations; which we are wont to denominate by words borrowed from similar functions of the bodily organs, and corresponding attributes of material things. Thus to *see*, is properly to acquire impressions of *sensible* objects by the organ of sight: but to the *mind* is also attributed an eye, with which we are analogically said to see objects *intellectual*. In like manner *great* and *little*, *equal* and *unequal*, *smooth* and *rough*, *sweet* and *sour*, are properly attributes of *material* substances: but

but they are analogically ascribed to such as are *immaterial*: for, without intending a figure, we speak of a great *mind* and a little *mind*; and the *natural temper* of one man is said to be equal, smooth, and sweet; while that of another is denominated unequal, rough, and sour. And if we thus express such *intellectual* things as fall more immediately under our observation, and may accordingly be contemplated with greater accuracy and attention, we cannot wonder that things *purely spiritual* and *divine*, which are far removed from our immediate and direct inspection, should be exhibited to our apprehension after the same manner. Indeed there is no other way by which they could be exhibited with effect: for it is only by analogical representations that we can form the least conception of the things relating to God and the invisible world. We can have no direct and immediate idea or conception of these things; for they are not objects of sense, nor do they make any part of that which passes within our own breasts. But material things, and the powers and operations of our own mind, furnish us with analogies by which we may, in some degree, conceive the nature of that Being who is infinite, and of those things
which

which are spiritual and heavenly. And the conceptions which we thus form, however imperfect and inadequate, are, nevertheless, as far as they extend, just and true: consequently the language in which they are expressed, although borrowed, is not merely figurative; but is significant of something real in the nature of the things conceived.

Before I apply what has been said, to the point more immediately in question, it may not be improper to state a few instances, in which the analogy contended for may plainly be discerned, and will hardly be denied.

The anger of God, is an expression which frequently occurs in the Scriptures. But are we to understand it *literally*? It were impious to do so: for the divine Being is without passions; and therefore cannot be subject to anger, properly so called. Is then the expression merely *figurative*, and without meaning? By no means: that were to take away one of the strongest restraints upon our corrupt inclinations. Is it not rather *analogical*; intended to give us some conception of a perfection in the Divine nature, by referring us to something in our own, to which it corresponds? In man it is the passion of anger which

which prompts him, upon receiving a provocation, to punish the offender. Now there is in the Divine nature a perfection, which inclines the Deity to punish those who wilfully transgress his laws. And since this perfection, though not properly anger, is nevertheless to God, what anger is to man, on account of this analogy the Scriptures have called it by the same name: and in so doing have given us to understand, that the same severity which an angry man, possessed of power to execute his will, would shew to those who had provoked his vengeance, we may expect from God, who is infinite in power, if we wilfully sin against him.

God is also said to be *compassionate* and *merciful*. Certainly not in a *literal* and *proper* sense. But the Scriptures by these expressions give us to understand, that, if not compassion and mercy properly so called, there are, nevertheless, in the Divine nature perfections corresponding to these feelings, which incline the Deity to relieve the wants, and to forgive the sins, of his miserable and offending creatures. And we are hence assured, that if we make our distresses known unto God, and with a true penitent heart, and lively faith, turn unto him, we shall experience

perience from him that lenity and kindness, which, in a corresponding situation, a merciful and compassionate fellow-creature would be disposed to shew us.

In like manner *the rewards and punishments of the other world* are described by the sacred writers in terms and phrases, which are properly significant of such joys and torments as are wont most sensibly to affect us in our *present* state: not to furnish us with any direct and positive knowledge of the invisible world; for of this we are not capable; but by analogical representations to give us some conception of what we are to expect hereafter; a conception, remote indeed and inadequate; sufficient, however, to excite our hopes, and to alarm our fears; to quicken our diligence in the great work of our salvation; and to induce us, by a suitable behaviour in this our time of trial, to prepare for that awful day, when we shall appear before the tribunal of the great Judge, “who will render to every man according to his deeds.”

The foregoing instances, in which the analogy is evident and undeniable, will assist us

¹ Rom. ii. 6.

in giving a right interpretation to those passages of Scripture, which immediately relate to our present subject.

And first, the *blood*, or *life*, of Christ is called in Scripture our *ransom*, and the *price of our redemption*. Now, admitting that these expressions are not to be understood *literally*, does it follow that they contain mere *figure* and *allusion*? By no means: they contain *truth* and *reality*. They are *analogical* expressions, used by the sacred writers to give us some conception of the method, by which we are delivered from the punishment of sin by Jesus Christ. We know the misery of a state of bondage and captivity: and under this view we are taught in Scripture to consider the natural state of man: he is "sold under " sin^k;" is "the servant of sin^l;" is under the power and dominion of the Devil, by whom he is "taken captive at his will^m." We further know, that one method of obtaining deliverance from captivity, is the interference of some friend, who undertakes to *redeem* the captive, or to purchase his freedom by the payment of a stipulated *price* or *ransom*. Under this character, Christ is repre-

^k Rom. vii. 14.

^l Rom. vi. 17.

^m 2 Tim. ii. 26.

sented to have appeared for us. He came to redeem us from the power of sin and Satan, by paying for our deliverance no less a price than his own blood. " In him we have redemption through his blood^a:" " The son of man," says he himself, " came to give his life a ransom for many^b;" and says St. Paul, " he gave himself a ransom for all^c." And we are taught by this representation, that the blood of Christ, in the deliverance of sinful man, corresponds to a price or ransom in the deliverance of a captive: and consequently is a price and a ransom, if not literally and properly, at least really and truly. And this St. Peter plainly intimates, when he opposes the blood of Christ to those things which, in the dealings of men one with another, are commonly employed as ransoms, or prices of redemption. " Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as *silver* and *gold*—but with the *precious blood of Christ*^d." Than which words language cannot declare with greater plainness and precision, that the blood of Christ is, in truth and reality, as much a price as silver and gold;

^a Eph. i. 7.

^b Matt. xx. 28.

^c 1 Tim. ii. 6.

^d 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

only a price of infinitely higher value. Since, then, we are not merely said to be redeemed, but further to be redeemed with a price; and since the price of our redemption is expressly opposed to such things as among men are commonly used for that purpose; there can be in this place no room for a mere figurative sense; but we must understand the Apostle to mean, that the blood of Christ is to man, in his spiritual captivity, what silver and gold is to a real or proper captive; the price of his redemption, or that to which his deliverance is immediately owing. And this is the whole for which we contend.

It has been insinuated^r, that the expressions *price* and *ransom*, are merely figurative, upon the ground that the representations of Scripture, upon this head, are not consistent and uniform. For the price of redemption is said to have been given, not only by Christ, but also by God himself: Thus we read in St. John, that “ God so loved the world, that
 “ he gave his only begotten Son; that who-
 “ soever believeth in him should not perish,
 “ but have everlasting life.” And again in St. Paul, “ he that spared not his own son,

^r Hist. of Cor. p. 201.

^s John iii. 16.

“ but ”

“ but delivered him up for us all, how shall
“ he not with him freely give us all things’?”
Were this any real objection, it would admit
of an easy answer. For in neither of the
places alleged is God said to have given his
son as a price or ransom. “ He so loved the
“ world that he gave”—that is, gave to the
world, or sent into the world, “ his only-be-
“ gotten son.” “ He spared not his own
“ son, but delivered him up for us all;” that
is, did not withhold him from us, but sent
him to pay the price of our redemption. And
thus, since God is not said to have given the
son in the same sense that the son gave him-
self, viz. as a ransom, we need not have re-
course to a figure for reconciling this sup-
posed inconsistency.

Attempts have also been made to with-
draw us from viewing the blood of Christ in
the light of a real price, by the consideration
of the person to whom, if a price, it ought to
have been paid. For it has been observed,
that a price must necessarily be paid to some
one: and that a ransom is always paid to
him, from whose power the captive is re-
deemed. And hence it has been argued, that

^t Rom. viii. 32.

if the blood of Christ be the price of our redemption, it must have been paid to the *Devil*; for to him mankind had been given over in consequence of the sin of Adam. In order to obviate this apparently shocking consequence, attempts have been made to shew, that the price was really paid to *God*; and that the *Devil*, in this case, is to be considered only as the executioner of Divine vengeance. How far this answer is satisfactory, I shall not stay to enquire: it will be sufficient to observe, that the argument itself is not well founded. For let it be considered, that the blood of Christ is *analogically* a price. Now the name which properly belongs to one term in an analogy, is transferred to its corresponding term, not because the things expressed by this name correspond to each other in every possible point; for this is by no means necessary; but because they correspond in a certain respect: nor are we required to take into consideration any circumstance, upon which the similitude of the relations is not founded. Now the blood of Christ corresponds to a proper price, in the deliverance effected by it: this is the circumstance upon which the similitude of the relations is founded; and therefore to this alone are we
required

required to attend. Consequently the objection, arising from the consideration of the person to whom the price is paid, is nugatory and futile; inasmuch as it proceeds upon a circumstance with which we are not necessarily concerned.

Secondly. The death of Christ is frequently called in Scripture a *sacrifice* and a *sin-offering*: not, as the Socinian hypothesis asserts, *figuratively*, or merely in allusion to the Jewish sacrifices; but rather *analogically*, because the death of Christ is to the Christian Church, what the sacrifices for sin were to the worshippers of the Tabernacle. Indeed the whole Legal economy furnishes abundant matter for analogies of this kind, being so constituted and contrived by Divine wisdom, as to correspond in a variety of instances to the Christian; thus serving, in an eminent degree, to illustrate and explain its nature and design. For the Law has an entire reference to the Gospel; and was ordained, not as a distinct and separate institution, but as a state of preparation and previous instruction: to use the language of St. Paul, it is "our schoolmaster" "to bring us unto Christ." And more

* Gal. iii. 24.

especially the things in the law which have any relation to the worship of God, or were consecrated and set apart for holy purposes, were intended, not merely for the more orderly and acceptable performance of religious worship in the times then present, but also to delineate and shadow forth another state of things; to be *types* and *figures* of a better dispensation, to be established in after times.

This typical nature of the legal dispensation the Apostle himself asserts, when he says of the law, that it had "a *shadow* of good things to come"; that it gave the outline, or afforded an obscure representation of those good things, which Christ, in the fulness of time, was to come and establish. To the same purpose he elsewhere affirms of the Tabernacle, and the vessels employed in the service of the Tabernacle, that they were "*patterns* of things in the heavens". And of the inner Tabernacle more especially, or the Holy of Holies, that it was a *figure* of the highest heaven. And of the Priests who offered gifts and sacrifices upon earth, he declares, that they served "unto the *example* and *shadow* of hea-

Heb. x. 1.

Heb. ix. 23.

Heb. ix. 24.

"venly

“venly things.” And he further declares a variety of circumstances in the Legal dispensation, to which he opposes corresponding circumstances in the Christian. Thus the *earthly* and *temporary* promises of the Law are opposed to the *heavenly* and *eternal* promises of the Gospel; the *carnal* ordinances of the former, to the *spiritual* institutions of the latter: *bodily* pollution, to *mental* uncleanness; the blood of the *expiatory sacrifices*, to the blood of *Christ*; and the power of the former in cleansing the *body*, to the power of the latter in purifying the *conscience*. By all which we are sufficiently authorised to consider the Law as a *typical* dispensation, delineating and prefiguring the state of things under the Gospel. And accordingly we affirm, that the passages of Scripture which speak of Christ as a *sacrifice* and a *sin-offering*, do not contain mere *figurative* allusions to the Jewish sacrifices, but ascribe a *real* and *immediate* efficacy to Christ’s death; an efficacy, corresponding to that which was antiently produced by the legal sin-offerings; since, in effect, they assert, that what a victim appointed for a sin-offering was under the old covenant, that

* Heb. viii. 5.

Christ himself is under the new: and as the blood of the legal sin-offerings cleansed the body, and qualified for the ceremonial worship prescribed by the Law, so the blood of Christ purifies the conscience, and consecrates to the spiritual service required in the Gospel.

In like manner the office of Christ is *analogically* represented to us by the name of *Priest* and *High Priest*. It has been already asserted, upon the authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, that the High Priest is a type of Christ: consequently what the High Priest was in the Legal economy, that Christ is in the Christian. Under the Law, the High Priest was accustomed to appear before God in the inner Tabernacle, and by an offering of blood to make an atonement for the people. Such, also, with respect to the Christian Church, is the office of Christ in the heavenly Tabernacle. Having suffered, as an expiatory victim, upon the cross, he ascended into heaven, where he is represented as appearing for us in the presence of God, and, by an offering of his own blood, making reconciliation for sins. Not that this representation obliges us to suppose that Christ, upon his ascension into heaven, literally sprinkled
his

his own blood in the presence of God, as the High Priest sprinkled the blood of the sin-offerings before the mercy-seat; but it gives us most assuredly to understand, that his interposition in our behalf is attended with a true and real effect, corresponding to that which was produced by the ministry of the High Priest in the earthly Tabernacle: that as by the latter the Israelites were sanctified, and admitted to the enjoyment of the temporal blessings of their covenant, so by the former the members of the Christian Church obtain remission of sins, and are made partakers of the spiritual blessings promised in the Gospel.

Christ is also said to *make intercession for us*, and to *be our Advocate with the Father*. I formerly shewed^a that Christ, by virtue of his priestly office, is necessarily an *Intercessor* for his people, and their *Advocate* with God: so that these representations are not really different from that which has been already considered. But supposing them to be distinct and separate, they will nevertheless still be found perfectly consistent both with it, and with each other. In strict propriety to *make*

^a Serm. IV.

intercession for a person, is to interpose in his behalf, for the purpose of reconciling him to one with whom he is at variance: and he is *an Advocate*, who pleads the cause of another in a court of judicature. Now we having, by sin, offended God, he is represented as at variance with us upon this account, and as having cast us out of his favour. And Christ is represented as interposing in our behalf, and undertaking our cause, that he might obtain of his heavenly Father to be reconciled unto us. We must not indeed imagine that Christ *literally* pleads our cause, or in moving and persuasive language intreats his heavenly Father to forego his anger, and to receive us again to favour: but the interposition of Christ, if not literally and properly intercession, is, nevertheless, analogous to it; for what a proper intercessor is between one man and another, that Christ is between God and man: and what a proper advocate is before a human judge, that Christ is in the presence of God; it is by his intervention that we are reconciled to God: it is by his agency that we are acquitted and discharged; and therefore he is truly and really our Intercessor and Advocate, if not literally, and in strict propriety of speech.

Thus,

Thus, in variety of language, do the sacred writers represent both the efficacy of Christ's death, and also the nature of his interposition between God and man. It has, indeed, been contended, that these different representations are themselves an argument for a figurative sense; because that otherwise the sacred writers are justly chargeable with inconsistency in calling the same thing by different names. "If," asks the Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity, "if one of the representations be real, and the rest figurative, how are we to distinguish among them, when the writers themselves give us no intimation of any such difference?" I answer, if these representations are all, as we affirm, analogical, it will follow that they are all real; that is, that they all express some truth and reality. And thus the whole objection falls to the ground.

But I wish to meet the objection fairly, and not to take advantage of an inaccurate expression. For, unquestionably, by *real*, our Historian, in this place, means *proper*; and his argument, justly stated, would run thus: Since of many different representations only

* Hist. of Cor. p. 192.

one can be proper, and in that case the rest must be figurative, how are we to distinguish among them? how are we to discover which is the proper representation, when the writers themselves give us no intimation of any such difference? And assuming that this cannot be done, he infers, that they are all figurative alike. To this I reply, that, of many different representations, it is not necessary either that one should be proper, and the rest figurative, or that all should be figurative alike. They may be (and we contend that they are) all analogical; and then they may (and we contend that they do) all express the same truth and reality, only under different names. Nor are the sacred writers any more chargeable with inconsistency on this account, than they would have been, had they illustrated the same thing by different figures. And I would observe in general, that the objections, urged by Socinian writers against the literal and proper sense of the expressions which we have now been considering, are not more favourable to their interpretation, than to that for which we contend; which has this further advantage, that, while it is agreeable to the usual, and indeed the only method by which Divine knowledge is, or can be communicated to man,

man, it affords a clear and consistent sense, not arbitrarily imposed, but plainly suggested by the words themselves, and manifestly intended by the sacred writers : whereas the method of our adversary is arbitrary and unlimited, and evidently intended not so much to explain the real meaning of the sacred writers, as to make them speak a language not wholly incompatible with his own hypothesis.

But besides this perversion of the sacred text, by the arbitrary imposition of a figurative sense, the same thing is also attempted, in other instances, by glosses and strained interpretations. For example : Christ is frequently said in the Scriptures to have died *for* us : which we understand to mean that he died *instead of* us : and hence we argue, that his death was the direct and immediate occasion of our deliverance from death. And this, it must be owned, is the obvious sense of the words. But the Socinian proposes another interpretation. For we are told that, in general, Christ's dying *for* us, may be interpreted of his dying *on our account*, or *for our benefit*. " Or if," proceeds our Author, " when rigorously interpreted, it should be " found that if Christ had not died, we must " have

“ have died, it is still however only *consequen-*
 “ *tially* so, and by no means *properly* and *di-*
 “ *rectly* so, as a *substitute* for us. For if, in
 “ consequence of Christ not having been sent
 “ to instruct and reform the world, mankind
 “ had continued unreformed, and the neces-
 “ sary consequence of Christ’s coming was
 “ his death, by whatever means, and in
 “ whatever manner it was brought about, it
 “ is plain that there was, in fact, no other al-
 “ ternative, but his death, or ours. How
 “ natural then was it, especially to writers
 “ accustomed to the strong figurative expres-
 “ sion of the East, to say that he died *in our*
 “ *stead*, without meaning it in a strict and
 “ proper sense ; as if God had absolutely re-
 “ quired the death of Christ, in order to sa-
 “ tisfy his justice for our sins, and as a neces-
 “ sary means of his forgiving us.” And thus,
 while the words clearly ascribe a direct and
 immediate efficacy to the death of Christ,
 which is also agreeable to the untortured sense
 of other passages, the proposed interpretation
 labours to destroy this efficacy, and to place
 the death of the Saviour upon a level with
 that of a mere Prophet, or Martyr : and, for

c Hist. of Cor. p. 199.

this

this purpose, unwarrantably substitutes a remote and unnatural sense, in the room of the plain and obvious one, merely for the sake of accommodating the language of Scripture to the interpreter's preconceived opinions.

But I need not dwell upon instances of this kind. For, unless it can be positively shewn that the doctrine of Atonement makes no part of the scheme of Christianity, but is foreign to the intention of the sacred writers, all such passages as apparently favour this doctrine, may justly be cited in its support, notwithstanding they may, by a strained interpretation, be taken in another sense. Now that there are passages which do thus apparently favour this doctrine, and cannot, without straining, be otherwise interpreted, will not be denied. It is acknowledged by our Adversary himself; who having declared that the opinion, which he opposes to this doctrine of Atonement, is the doctrine of reason, and of the Old Testament, and is likewise agreeable to the general tenor of the New Testament, concludes his history of this doctrine with this remarkable concession. "In this, then, let
 " us acquiesce, not doubting but that, *though*
 " *perhaps not at present*, we shall in time be
 " able, without any effort or straining, to ex-

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plain

“ plain all particular expressions in the apostolical epistles, &c. in a manner perfectly consistent with the general strain of their own writings, and the rest of the Scriptures^d. ”

It appears, then, from the confession of our Adversary, that the language of Scripture is, on some occasions at least, undeniably for us ; and that there are passages, the force of which can only be eluded, by wresting the words from their natural and obvious sense, and torturing them into a different meaning. But if this mode of proceeding be fair and allowable, there is no article of the Christian faith which may not be called in question. For the imperfection of language necessarily subjects the most precise and accurate expressions to misconstruction ; and let a writer be ever so careful and guarded, the ingenuity of a sophist will still contrive to pervert his meaning, and to impose upon his words a sense different from that which they obviously bear, and which he originally intended. And since the language of Scripture is no less capable of perversion and misconstruction than that of any other book, it follows, that

^d Hist. of Cor. p. 279.

neither

neither the doctrine of Atonement, nor any other doctrine, can be so positively and clearly revealed, as wholly to preclude all possibility of dispute and opposition : so that the force of any language, even more precise and accurate, if such could be found, than that in which the doctrine is at present revealed, might, by the same means, be evaded, and the doctrine itself called in question.

But we should remember that God hath given us a revelation of his will, not to exercise our wit and ingenuity, but for our information and instruction. To the poor is the Gospel preached : and therefore, in all necessary points, its meaning cannot be dark and intricate, discoverable only by the wise and learned ; but must be simple and intelligible, adapted to the capacity of those for whose use it was designed. A forced interpretation is always to be suspected : and even where the words of Scripture will, without effort or straining, admit of different senses, the preference should be given, where it is justly due, to the most natural and obvious. And though we grant in general, that, in order to preserve the consistency of Revelation, recourse must sometimes be had to a more remote, and perhaps a figurative sense ; we

may at least require that it be not done, but upon sufficient grounds, and where the necessity is most apparent. And we should be extremely careful, lest affection for a favourite hypothesis influence our judgment; lest, while, in support of this hypothesis, we labour to reconcile apparent discordances in the sacred volume, we in reality pervert its meaning, to the prejudice of some important article of our Christian faith.

The application of these reflections to the case before us, must in part have appeared already; and will hereafter more fully appear, when we come to consider the ground, upon which our Historian justifies that method of interpretation, which we have been examining in the preceding Discourse.

S E R M O N VI.

I COR. i. 23.

We preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

AN established opinion, which claims to be a Christian doctrine, and to be derived from the Scriptures, cannot be opposed with the least prospect of success, unless it can be shewn, that the Advocates of this opinion have mistaken the meaning of the inspired writers, and have appealed in its behalf to passages of Scripture, which may and ought to be taken in a different sense. This accordingly has been attempted by the Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity; who contends, that the scriptural representations of the death of Christ, and various ex-

pressions relating to it, which are commonly supposed to favour the doctrine of Atonement, have been greatly misunderstood, and ought to be interpreted in another and a better manner, more consonant, as he conceives, with the general tenor of Revelation, and the true end of our Saviour's advent.

In order fully to establish this position, it is plainly incumbent upon him to prove these two things: first, that the words of Scripture are capable of another sense; and, secondly, that this other sense ought, in the present instance, to be admitted.

In the last Discourse we considered the general method of interpretation, by which he endeavours to prove the first of these points; and found it to consist in torture and evasion, rather than in direct explanation; and in the arbitrary imposition of a remote and figurative sense, contrary to the obvious meaning of the expressions themselves, and the manifest intention of the sacred writers.

But, for argument's sake, let us suppose that he has thus far succeeded: let us allow that the sense proposed, although forced and unnatural, is nevertheless not wholly inadmissible; but might be received, did the necessity of the case require it. And let us now proceed

proceed to examine, whether such necessity really does exist; whether our Historian has proved the second thing required, and has made out such a case, as will justify our rejection of the plain and obvious meaning of the sacred writings, in order to substitute in its room that remote and figurative sense, for which he contends.

By referring to the History itself, it will be found, that our Opponent, before he ventures to propose his interpretation of the passages relating to our present subject, first prepares the way for its more easy admission, by attempting to prove, that the doctrine of Atonement makes no part of that scheme of religion which is delivered to us in the Scriptures, but is wholly of human invention. And indeed, could this be clearly and undeniably proved, I would no longer dispute against the proposed interpretation. For in that case the sacred writers could never have had it in contemplation to reveal this doctrine; and consequently their language, whatever might be its apparent meaning, must really bear a different sense; and any consistent sense, however remote, would be preferable to one, by which a mere human device is constituted a

Christian doctrine. I am therefore by no means unwilling that the admiffibility of the propofed interpretation fhould be made to depend upon the fuccefs of this attempt. Let us therefore confider the objections taken againft our doctrine upon this ground, and examine the arguments, advanced by our Hiftorian, in proof of the pofition above-mentioned, viz. that the doctrine of Atone-ment makes no part of that fcheme of religion, which is contained in the Scriptures.

And, firft, we are told, that “ it is hardly
 “ poffible not to fufpect the truth of this
 “ doctrine, when we confider that the gene-
 “ ral maxims to which it may be reduced,
 “ are no where laid down, or afferted, in the
 “ Scriptures.” And this, it is infinuated, is
 contrary to the ufual practice of the facred
 writers, who generally “ affign the reafons of
 “ fuch of the Divine proceedings refpecting
 “ the human race, as are more difficult to be
 “ comprehended, and the neceffity and pro-
 “ priety of which are not very obvious, and
 “ might be liable to be called in queftion.”
 That fuch is the ufual practice of the facred

* Hift. of Cor. v. i. p. 154.

writers,

writers, is an assertion, of which no proof whatsoever is adduced. And I conceive that the principle itself, if it were once admitted as a proper rule of judging in Divine things, might be productive of much mischief, and would tend to the overthrow of all religion, both natural and revealed. For upon this ground we should be at liberty to call in question every Divine proceeding, the reason of which was not expressly assigned, or the necessity and propriety of which we could not comprehend. Now, in the common and general course of things, it is allowed, that the ways of God are frequently dark and intricate; nor is it always easy to reconcile them to our natural notions of Divine perfection. But shall we on this account perversely call in question the superintending providence, the wisdom, the justice, or the goodness of the Deity? Rather let us confess our own weakness and incapacity, and adore that depth which we cannot fathom. It is the same in the case of Revelation; the general intention of which is to teach us *what* God wills, not *why* he wills it; and to acquaint us, not so much with the reasons of his proceedings respecting man, as with the proceedings themselves: and he expects from us an humble acquiescence,

quiescence, although we may not readily comprehend the necessity, or even the propriety, of the things revealed. It is sufficient for us to know, in general, that God never acts without a cause, and that what he does is always wise and proper to be done.

Were it necessary to prove the general doctrine here advanced, I might instance, in confirmation of it, the law imposed upon the first man; of which neither the end, nor the reasons, are, as far as I know, any where declared. We may indeed *infer*, that the end proposed was the trial of man's obedience. But why an especial trial was at all appointed, and why such a trial as that to which man was subjected, we are not told. With respect also to the influence of man's transgression, we are told, in general, that this one man's disobedience introduced sin and death into the world, and corrupted and depraved the whole human race. But why the influence should be thus extensive; why the transgressor should not alone suffer, but should be permitted to transmit the stain through a long series of future generations; these are circumstances with which we are nearly concerned, but of which we are in total ignorance. In like manner we are told in general, that the
recovery

recovery of fallen man, and his restoration to the favour of God, was effected “ through “ the redemption that is in Jesus Christ ; “ whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation “ through faith in his blood^b : ” but the reasons of this dispensation, why a propitiation should be ordained at all ; and why such a propitiation as that which the Divine wisdom thought fit to adopt ; and how the blood of Christ attained the end for which it was shed, are circumstances which, perhaps, are nowhere expressly revealed. But let the word of God still stand sure : and let us with becoming thankfulness still receive the dispensation itself, and not presumptuously reject it, because we are not admitted to the councils of heaven, and indulged with a knowledge of every circumstance connected with it. Notwithstanding, therefore, we may not be able to discover, in any of the books of Scripture, the principle upon which the doctrine of Atonement is founded, this need not excite in us any surprise, nor ought the doctrine itself to fall, upon this account, under the least suspicion.

^b Rom. iii. 24, 25.

But

But let me not be thought to have mistaken the force of our Historian's argument. I am aware that his intention was not to assert generally, that there is nothing laid down in the Scriptures which can be assumed as the principle, upon which the doctrine of Atonement is founded; but only, that the principle which the doctrine itself holds forth, or rather, that which some assertors of the doctrine have assumed as its principle, is nowhere to be found in any of the books of Scripture. The principle here alluded to, upon which the modern doctrine of Atonement is represented entirely to depend, is the following, viz. that God cannot extend his mercy to sinners, till his justice has been fully satisfied. It must not be denied, that this principle may be collected and inferred from the writings of some upon the subject, who, in explaining and defending this doctrine, may, as we are here told, have asserted, that "sin is of
" so heinous a nature, that God cannot pardon it without an adequate satisfaction
" being made to his justice, and to the honour of his laws and government." But still I contend, that assertions of this kind are not necessarily false, because they cannot be found in the holy Scriptures; nor, secondly,
could

could they even be proved to be false, would the doctrine of Atonement be at all affected.

And, first, let us suppose that the principle assigned is no where to be found in the holy Scriptures; still, I say, it does not follow that it is not the true principle upon which the doctrine is founded. It has already been observed, that the Scriptures do not always assign the reasons of the Divine proceedings. But since God cannot be supposed ever to act without a cause, whatever he does must be founded upon something in his own nature, or in the nature and reason of the thing, which makes it wise and proper to be done. Consequently where the Scriptures are silent respecting the reason of any of the Divine proceedings, there still must be a reason; and any assignable reason may be the true one, which is not repugnant to the nature of God, or inconsistent with the nature of the thing revealed. And therefore, in the present case, it does not immediately follow, that the principle assigned is not the true principle upon which the doctrine of Atonement is founded, notwithstanding we grant that it is no where laid down as such in any of the books of Scripture.

But, secondly, let us further grant, that the
silence

silence of the Scriptures is sufficient to impeach the principle of any doctrine; and consequently that the one here assigned, is not the true principle upon which the doctrine in question is founded: yet how does this affect the doctrine itself? If God does sometimes conceal from us the reasons of his proceedings, there may, and occasionally there will be cases, in which we must confess our ignorance, and be contented to rely implicitly upon the wisdom and goodness of the Deity for the rectitude and fitness of what he does, without presuming to reduce his measures to our own standard of what is right and fit. But, if the truth of a doctrine still remains sure and unimpaired, notwithstanding our ignorance of the foundation upon which it rests, and our consequent inability to fix it upon any principle at all, as little surely must it be affected by our error in fixing it upon a false principle.

I am led to insist the more strenuously upon this point, because many, if not the greater part, of the arguments commonly urged by Socinian writers, are directed against the doctrine considered under this view of it; viz. as maintaining the necessity of an *ade-*
quate

quate satisfaction to the Divine justice, in order to the pardon of sin: and when, as they think, they have made it appear, that this opinion is not supported by any good authority, they immediately glory, as though they had obtained a complete victory. Whereas, in truth, arguments of this kind bear not at all upon the main question; which is, not why an atonement was ordained, or to which of the Divine attributes it was made; but simply, whether it has been made at all. So that the ground, which the enemy is thus eager to dispute, might be wholly abandoned, and fairly given up, without the least injury to our cause. Not that the ground is in itself altogether untenable. For arguments are by no means wanting, by which, were it necessary, we might sufficiently justify and defend the general position, that Christ died to make satisfaction for the sins of men: and still further, that this satisfaction was made to Divine justice. By the justice of God, we here mean that attribute of his nature, by which, in the impartial administration of his righteous government, he ordains the punishment of those who transgress his laws. For, agreeably to the practice of the sacred writers, in speaking of the Deity, we distinguish in
his

his nature various attributes, obtained by analogy from corresponding attributes in our own; to which we are wont to refer the Divine proceedings, each to that attribute which is peculiarly adapted to it. Thus the creation of the universe we attribute to his power; its harmony and order, to his wisdom; the bountiful provision made for our preservation and support, to his goodness; the favour shewn to penitent sinners, to his mercy; and in like manner the punishment of obstinate transgressors, to his justice. Now it is agreeable to the natural apprehensions of our own mind, that God, who is essentially pure and holy, and who necessarily holds sin in abhorrence, should be offended with those who wilfully transgress his laws; and they, with whom he is offended, may reasonably expect from his justice the due reward of their evil deeds. Declarations to the same effect abound in the holy Scriptures; from which we further learn, that the Divine displeasure against sin was not appeased without a propitiation. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that it was, on some account or other, wise and proper that he should be propitiated, before he pardoned sin. And since, in consequence of the pardon thus obtained, his justice no longer
required

required that the punishment due to sin should be inflicted upon the offenders; is not this in effect to say, that, by means of the appointed propitiation for sin, satisfaction was made to the Divine justice. Though, therefore, I would not limit the Divine power, and say what the Almighty Governor of the universe can, or cannot do, in his own world, and with his own creatures; though I would not assert, that an *adequate* satisfaction to Divine justice, or indeed any satisfaction at all, was absolutely and indispensably necessary to the pardon of sin (for of this, independently of Revelation, we can know nothing in our present state); yet I scruple not to say, in general terms, that, by the appointment of God, satisfaction has been made to his justice, and that without such satisfaction he did not think fit to remit the punishment of sin. What would have ensued, supposing no satisfaction had been appointed; whether in such case it would have been consistent with the nature and attributes of God, that he should be propitious to fallen man; is a question concerning which the Scriptures are totally silent, and therefore we presume not to determine.

And thus the notion of a satisfaction, although no where, as far as I know, expressly

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asserted

asserted in the Scriptures, appears nevertheless to be agreeable to our own apprehensions of the Divine nature, and to the account given in the Scriptures of the Divine proceedings; and may therefore safely be admitted. If, after all, our Adversaries still remain hostile to this mode of expressing our opinion, I wish not to contest the matter; because, as I before observed, it is a contest in which the merits of the question are not at all concerned. We have done all that can reasonably be required of us, when we have proved from the Scriptures, that Christ, by dying for us, became the propitiation for our sins: nor is it in the least necessary that we should further shew, what were the reasons which moved God to ordain such a propitiation, or by what mode of operation the death of Christ effects the purpose for which it was ordained.

But the objection does not stop here. For we are told, not only that the sacred writers, in speaking of the malignant nature of sin, never assert, that God cannot pardon it without an adequate satisfaction being made to his justice; but further, that "the contrary sentiment occurs every where; viz. that "repentance and a good life are, *of themselves,*

"*elves*, sufficient to recommend us to the " Divine favour." This part of the objection directly meets the question; and, if it could be supported, would overthrow, not only the notion of a satisfaction to Divine justice, but also the whole doctrine of Atonement, with every modification of it. For if repentance and a good life are, either in their own nature, or by the express appointment of God, sufficient *of themselves* to recommend us to the Divine favour, then the propitiation for which we contend, must be altogether unnecessary, and therefore would not have been appointed. Here then we may be fairly said to be at issue; and upon the determination of this point, the decision of the controversy may be made to depend. Now, that repentance and a good life are pleasing in the sight of God, and will be rewarded with his favourable acceptance, the Scriptures unquestionably declare, and we most thankfully acknowledge. This, therefore, makes no part of the present question; which refers solely to this circumstance, *how*, or *on what account*, repentance and a good life came to be thus acceptable to God? whether they are so of

* Hist. of Cor. p. 155.

themselves; that is, on account of their own intrinsic value, without reference to any atonement or propitiation for sin; or whether they are become so, through the atonement made by Jesus Christ? The expressions, and passages of Scripture, which apparently favour our side of the question, are, notwithstanding any insinuation to the contrary, neither few nor obscure^d; and therefore, before we agree to let go our faith, and suffer these passages to be explained away, it behoves us carefully to enquire, whether our Opponent has fully and satisfactorily made good his assertion, that repentance and a good life are declared in the Scriptures to be, *of themselves*, sufficient to recommend us to the Divine favour. Where then, let us ask, is any such declaration to be found? Is it in the addresses made by inspired persons to notorious sinners, and in the general exhortations to repentance? We are indeed referred to these; and it is insinuated that they are so expressed, as to exclude the doctrine for which we contend. For we are told, that, “notwithstanding so many notorious sinners, particular persons, and whole nations, are addressed by inspired

^d Hist. of Cor. p. 156.

“ persons,

“ persons, and their conduct strongly remon-
 “ strated against in the course of the sacred
 “ history, none of them are ever directed to
 “ any thing further than their own hearts and
 “ lives. *Return unto me, and I will return*
 “ *unto you*, is the substance of all they say on
 “ these occasions *.”

Now had the question been concerning the
acceptableness of repentance, such passages, as
 contain general declarations of God's willing-
 ness to receive returning sinners, would have
 been urged with propriety and effect. But
 concerning this there is no dispute. We all
 agree that God will be merciful to such as
 truly repent, and turn to him; and therefore
 we freely acknowledge all that passages of this
 kind can be said to prove; which is simply,
 that repentance and a good life are acceptable
 to God; but by no means that they are *of*
themselves acceptable. And therefore in vain
 are we referred to these addresses and exhort-
 ations, for sentiments incompatible with the
 doctrine of Atonement.

If it be insisted, that although passages of
 this kind do not positively prove that repent-
 ance and a good life are of themselves accept-

* Hist. of Cor. p. 156.

able, yet they afford a kind of presumptive proof against the doctrine of Atonement ; because, allowing it to be true, it is reasonable to conclude, that frequent intimations of it would have accompanied the exhortations to repentance, and the declarations of Divine mercy, which every where abound in the sacred books ; I wish it to be considered, on the other hand, that these exhortations and declarations are all of them subsequent to the promise of a Redeemer : for, according to our doctrine, the covenant of works was immediately succeeded by the covenant of grace ; and even from the fall of Adam, God became propitious to mankind, in consequence of the atonement to be made in after times, and, in the contemplation of the Divine mind, considered as already made, by Jesus Christ ; who on this account is called “ the Lamb, slain from the foundation of the world’.” So that the addresses to sinners, and the exhortations to repentance, which abound in the Scriptures, are founded upon, and consequently presuppose, this work of Christ : and therefore are not to be considered as declarations of the terms upon which God, offended

by the sins of men, will be appeased, and become propitious; for he who is so merciful as to declare his acceptance of sincere repentance, in the room of that sinless perfection which was required by the first covenant, must be considered as already propitiated; but are rather expressions of his compassionate concern for his creatures, and persuasions that they would not, by their own obstinacy and wilful disobedience, deprive themselves of those blessings, which, now that he is reconciled, he is willing to bestow upon them. It would therefore be no impeachment of our doctrine, even if it could be proved that these addresses and exhortations, which thus imply, and are founded upon, a previous reconciliation, are not constantly, or indeed commonly, accompanied by express assertions of the reconciliation itself. Indeed such assertions are hardly to be expected any where in the Old Testament, under which both the reconciliation, and the manner of it, were but darkly intimated in promises and predictions, and faintly represented by types and ceremonial observances: and in any part of Scripture are rather to be sought in such passages, as expressly treat of man's fall, and the method by which he was restored to a state of grace

and salvation, than in those which presuppose this state of salvation, and are addressed to such as have already been called to it, and are actually in it.

We should, therefore, be little disposed to allow that repentance and a good life are *of themselves* sufficient to recommend us to the Divine favour, even if it could be shewn, that the sacred writers in general, and especially those of the Old Testament, do not, in their addresses and exhortations to sinners, make mention of the doctrine for which we contend. If, indeed, the intention of our doctrine had been to supersede repentance and a good life, the argument of our Opponent would not have been without force. But this is not the case. A propitiation for sin, and the acceptableness of repentance in consequence of that propitiation, are perfectly consistent; and, for aught that we know, are inseparably connected. We know not whether, without a propitiation, repentance would have been acceptable to God, or even possible to man: at least it is not for us to separate what God hath joined together. And yet upon their separation the opinion of our Adversary, that repentance and a good life are *of themselves* sufficient to recommend us to the

the

the Divine favour, entirely depends. For this opinion is virtually founded upon the two following assumptions: first, that there is nothing in the nature or attributes of God, which requires a propitiation for sin, in order to make repentance acceptable; for if there be, then repentance and a good life are not of themselves sufficient: secondly, that if there had been no propitiation, repentance and a good life would, notwithstanding, have been possible to man.

And, first, the opinion, that repentance and a good life are of themselves sufficient, is founded upon the assumption that there is nothing in the Divine nature, or attributes, which requires a propitiation for sin; an assumption, incapable, as I conceive, of the least proof. For the position itself presupposes such an intimate knowledge of the Deity, as is not attainable by man in his present state. “Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven, what canst thou do? deeper than hell, what canst thou know?” It is reserved for us in a future state, to see God as he is.

Job xi. 7, 8.

At

At present our faculties are limited, and able to give us a very imperfect knowledge even of the things which are before us; and can by no means raise us to the knowledge of him who is infinite and invisible. We know not God as he is; and therefore, unassisted by revelation, we cannot determine what his attributes do, or do not, require. Of this we may be assured, that he best knows what is agreeable to the purity of his own nature, and what will preserve the glory of his attributes undiminished and unimpeached. Instead, therefore, of leaning to our own understandings, and of previously determining that nothing relating to God can be true, which does not approve itself to our fallible judgment, it will be safer far to take his word for our guide, and to receive with humility and submission whatever we find to be there revealed; in the fullest confidence that his proceedings, however they may appear to us, must, in themselves, be wise and good.

The other assumption, that repentance and a good life would have been possible to man, if no propitiation had been made, is equally incapable of proof. If, as we believe, a propitiation has been made, it is impossible for us to say what, without a propitiation, would have

have been our state. We know not the full and precise meaning of the Divine threat, "thou shalt surely die^b:" whether it was intended to convey to man, that, upon the commission of sin, he should immediately and at once be deprived of being, and reduced to his primitive nothing; or only that he, who was originally designed for a life of immortality and incorruption, should become mortal, and subject to death. But, whatever be the meaning of the words, this at least is certain, that the provision which the promise of a Saviour made for the expiation of man's offence, reversed, in some measure, the sentence of condemnation which the law denounced, and placed the transgressor in a state far different from that in which he would have been, had the vengeance of God been fully executed. It was this gracious promise which made man again an object of favour; which again placed him in a state of trial; and again brought within his reach life and immortality. And therefore to the appointment of Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, we owe that God vouchsafes to accept that repentance, and that imperfect virtue, of which man in his present

^b Gen. ii. 17.

state is capable. And who will say, that the very ability to repent, and the very existence of that virtue, imperfect as it is, must not be ascribed to the same cause? Let us consider the case of offenders, whose rank in the scale of being was once higher than that of man, even at his first creation: I mean the angels who kept not their first estate. By their fall, they were lost for ever; being, as St. Jude expresses it, "reserved in everlasting chains " under darkness unto the judgment of the " great day¹," without the most distant hope of escaping that fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries of God. In their case repentance would be unavailable. But we no where read that they either do or can repent. Instead of that meek contrition, that godly sorrow, which worketh repentance unto salvation, and inspires an humble hope of pardon and acceptance; theirs is a frantic grief, arising from disappointed pride, and venting itself in an impious and malicious rage against that unerring justice, which has unalterably fixed their doom. It is not for us to say, why that grace, which was vouchsafed to man, was denied to them. We know only

¹ Jude 6,

that for them no propitiation was appointed; and who can tell what, without a propitiation, would have been the state of fallen man? Perhaps altogether as hopeless and deplorable as the state of fallen angels! We, like them, might have been objects, not of mercy, but of vengeance; for ever cut off from God, and doomed to irrevocable condemnation! At all events the contrary cannot be proved; and proved it ought to be, before we admit that repentance and a good life are, *of themselves*, sufficient to recommend us to the Divine favour.

But it is contended, that the Scriptures themselves favour this opinion, since they “uniformly represent God as our universal parent, pardoning sinners *freely*; that is,” we are told, “from his natural goodness and mercy, whenever they truly repent, and reform their lives*.” And this representation of the Divine being, it is further contended, is inconsistent with the doctrine of Atonement; which, by making the pardon of sin to depend upon a foreign consideration, is supposed to limit and impose a restraint

* Hist. of Cor. p. 156.

upon that goodness and compassion, which the Scriptures affirm to be free and unconfin'd.

It will not be difficult to shew, that this objection, if allowed to be valid, would militate no less against the opinion of our Adversary, than against the doctrine of Atonement: but that in reality it proceeds upon a gross mistake both of the true sense of Scripture, and of the nature of our doctrine. But because it is an objection which has been frequently urged, and upon which our Adversaries seem to depend with no little confidence, it will be proper to enter more at large into the subject, than can conveniently be done upon the present occasion: I shall therefore reserve the full consideration of it for the next Discourse.

S E R M O N VII.

I COR. i. 23.

We preach Christ crucified; to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness.

AMONG the various objections, which have been urged by Socinian writers against the doctrine of Atonement, none has been repeated more frequently, or pressed with greater earnestness and confidence, than that which I am now to consider: I mean, the supposed inconsistency of this doctrine, with the free grace and goodness of God. At the same time there is no objection which rests upon a weaker foundation, or betrays a more gross misunderstanding of the doctrine, which it professes to oppose.

The

The Historian of the Corruptions of Christianity states and supports this objection in the following manner. Having asserted, agreeably to the quotation made at the close of the last Discourse, that the Scriptures “ uniformly represent God as our universal
“ parent, pardoning sinners *freely*, that is,
“ from his natural goodness and mercy, when-
“ ever they truly repent and reform their
“ lives,” he thus proceeds: “ All the decla-
“ rations of Divine mercy are made without
“ reserve or limitation to the truly penitent,
“ through all the books of Scripture, with-
“ out the most distant hint of any regard
“ being had to the sufferings or merit of any
“ being whatever.” In proof of this position, he brings from the Old Testament the declaration which God made of his character to Moses, presently after the Israelites had sinned, in making the golden calf. “ And the
“ Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed
“ the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gra-
“ cious, long suffering, abundant in goodness
“ and truth, keeping mercy for thousands,
“ forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and
“ sin.” And then, as a further proof,

* Exod. xxxiv. 6, 7.

upon which he seems chiefly to depend, he quotes from the New Testament the declaration of the Apostle, that we are *justified freely by the grace of God*^b. “Now certainly,” proceeds he, “if the favour had been procured by the suffering of another person, it could not have been said to be bestowed *freely*.” And again in another place, commenting upon these same words, he observes, that the word *freely* “implies that forgiveness is the *free gift* of God, and proceeds “from his essential goodness and mercy, without regard to any foreign consideration whatever.”

Let me briefly bring to your recollection, that the principal position, mentioned in the preceding passage, is the following; viz. that the declarations of Divine mercy are made without reserve or limitation to the truly penitent, without the most distant hint of any regard being had to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever. Now that God hath declared in Scripture, that sincere penitents are the objects of his mercy, I readily admit. But then I contend, that this very circum-

^b Rom. iii. 24.—Tit. iii. 7.

^c Hist. of Cor. vol. i. p. 156.

stance implies a reserve and limitation. Under the Gospel-dispensation, offers of mercy are made, not to the penitent merely, but to all without exception. Our Lord commanded his Apostles to "preach the Gospel to every creature." And he says of himself, that he "came to call *sinners* to repentance." But of these such only as obey the call, are accepted of God. Since, then, forgiveness is not extended indiscriminately to all who have sinned, but is confined to such sinners, as by repentance are qualified for so great a blessing, there is, unquestionably, in the mode of God's dispensing mercy, a reserve and limitation.

As for the other assertion, that there is not in any of the books of Scripture the most distant hint that God, in dispensing mercy, pays regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever, it may be opposed by a multitude of instances to the contrary, collected from various parts of Scripture. The Psalmist, speaking of the wonders which God had wrought for the deliverance of his people out of Egypt, and for their preservation in the wilderness, declares, that these mercies were

* Mark xvi. 15.

† Mark ii. 17.

vouchsafed unto them, because God “remembered his holy promise, and Abraham “his servant^a.” And when the Israelites had provoked God by their sin, in making the golden calf, Moses, in interceding for them, does not recommend them to mercy on account of their sincere repentance (for at this very time they were engaged in the idolatrous act), but he urges a foreign consideration; namely, the promise which God had made to their forefathers, his tried and faithful servants: “Remember,” says he, “Abraham, “Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom “thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst “unto them, I will multiply your seed as the “stars of heaven, and all this land that I “have spoken of, will I give unto your seed, “and they shall inherit it for ever.” And his prayer was heard; for we read that “the “Lord repented of the evil which he thought “to do unto his people^b.” And in another place Moses petitions for them, not on account of their repentance, or obedience, for he acknowledges their obstinacy and disobedience; but on account of himself, and in consideration of the favour which he had him-

^a Ps. cv. 42.

^b Exod. xxxii. 13, 14.

self found with God. "If now," says he, "I have found grace in thy sight, O Lord, let my Lord, I pray thee, go amongst us (for it is a stiff-necked people), and pardon our iniquity and our sin, and take us for thine inheritance." And God granted his petition; for in the very next verse he declares, that he made a covenant with them¹. And in after-times the idolatry of King Solomon was not punished, as it deserved, with the loss of his kingdom; but God was pleased to continue him king all the days of his life, for David his father's sake; "because," says a prophet speaking in the name of God, "*he* kept my commandments and my statutes²." And again in the reign of Hezekiah, when the Assyrians came up against Jerusalem, God declares by the prophet Isaiah, "I will defend this city to save it for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake¹." So that if, upon this subject, we are allowed to have recourse to the Old Testament, there is, not a distant hint, but positive proof, that God does not always dispense mercy to the truly penitent, merely as such, but sometimes pays

¹ Exod. xxxiv. 9, 10.

² 1 Kings xi. 34.

¹ Is. xxxvii. 35.

regard to a foreign consideration; by which he is even moved to be favourable to those who continue still in their sins.

Nor is our doctrine in the least invalidated, or the opinion of our Adversary at all confirmed, by the passage quoted from the Old Testament, which, at most, is only silent respecting a circumstance not necessary to be mentioned. For God is here merely proclaiming his name and his attributes, in compliance with the request of his servant Moses, who had desired to see his glory: but professes not to declare either the reasons of his gracious dealings with mankind, or the method by which he thinks fit to carry his benevolent designs into effect. And therefore in vain was this passage adduced to prove, that God, in shewing mercy, pays no regard to the sufferings or merit of any being whatever.

Still less to our Adversary's purpose is the passage from the New Testament, which, even in the sense imposed upon it by himself, will be found, upon examination, no more to prove his principal position, than the former quotation from the Old Testament; and, in its true sense, is so far from being conclusive against us, that it is rather on our side. "Being justified," says the Apostle, "freely

“ by his grace :” *freely* ; that is, says our Author, “ from the essential goodness and mercy
“ of God, without regard to any foreign con-
“ sideration whatever.” And, taking the
word in this sense, he argues, that, if “ the
“ favour had been procured by the suffering
“ of another person, it could not have been
“ said to be bestowed freely.” Now, upon
the ground here assumed, a thing can then
only be said to be done freely, when it is done
unconditionally ; when the will of the agent
is unconfined, and exempt from the operation
of any consideration without itself. But if
this be the meaning of the term ; if God, in
the pardon of sin, be supposed to proceed after
this method ; then, to use the words of an emi-
nent Prelate ^m, the highest Antinomianism is
the truest doctrine. For since forgiveness can
only be accounted a free gift by being de-
pendant upon no condition, and subject to no
restriction, it follows, that the repentance and
amendment of the offender himself are no
more to be regarded, than the sufferings or
merit of any other being ; and consequently
that all sinners, without reserve or limitation,

^m Stillingfleet, in his Discourse concerning the true rea-
son of the sufferings of Christ.

have an equal claim to pardon, whether they repent or no. If, to avoid so shocking a consequence, it be said that God is free to chuse the objects to whom he will shew mercy, and to impose upon them such restrictions, and to require in them such qualifications as he thinks fit ; I contend it may, with equal reason, be asserted, that he is also free to dispense this mercy for such reasons, and by such methods, as he in his wisdom shall determine to be most conducive to his own glory, and the good of his creatures. And I know of no reason why a regard to the sufferings or merit of another person should any more destroy the freedom of the gift, than the requisition of certain qualifications in the object himself. And thus, upon the ground assumed by our Adversary, the argument, derived from this passage, either proves as much against him as against us, or, which is rather the case, proves nothing against either ; and is therefore wholly inapplicable to the point in question.

But the argument itself proceeds upon a mistake of the Apostle's meaning. For the expression *freely*, has an immediate reference to ourselves, and to our own exertions in the work of justification, not to any thing which

has been done by another in our behalf ; and is here used to denote the manner in which the blessing is bestowed, not the means by which it was procured. “ Being justified freely by his grace :” freely ; in the original *δωρεαν* ; in the way of a gift, unmerited by us ; and not in the way of a reward for our worthiness or desert : agreeably to the assertion of the Apostle in another place, “ Not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us.” To be *justified*, is to be accounted righteous in the sight of God, and to be admitted as such to his favour and acceptance. But man, in his fallen state, had nothing in himself, and could do nothing of himself, by which he might merit, or claim as his due, so great a benefit. By sin he was become guilty before God, and subject to the curse of the law : by sin he had corrupted his faculties, and had lost much of that light and strength by means of which, while in a state of innocence, he had both a knowledge of his duty, and also ability to perform it : so that unfinning obedience, which, under the first covenant, was the duty of man, and which

• Tit. iii. 5.

alone

alone could give him a right and title to life and happiness, was now no longer in his power. Having, therefore, no pretension to real righteousness, our absolution from the guilt of sin, and our admission to the character and privileges of righteous persons, must be imputed, not to our merit, but to God's grace; it is an act of mercy, which we must acknowledge and receive as a free gift, and not demand as a due reward.

Nor is the freedom of the gift destroyed, either by the conditions upon which it is bestowed, or by the means through which it was procured. Man being endued, under the first covenant, with powers fully adequate to the performance of an entire obedience, such an obedience might with justice be required of him; and being required, became his duty. And when, by the voluntary abuse of his faculties, he had lost the ability to perform his duty, this could impose no obligation upon God to accept of less. And therefore that God should cancel the first, and enter into a new covenant with us, in which he requires a duty better adapted to the natural powers still remaining to us, and hath moreover promised supernatural assistance in the performance of it; that instead of unsinning obedience,

dience, which, according to the tenor of the first covenant, he might still have required, he should accept of our sincere endeavours to obey his will, and should engage to absolve from guilt, and to receive as righteous, all who truly repent and turn to him; this is throughout a proceeding, not of justice, but of mercy; and must be wholly ascribed, not to our merit, but to God's free grace. Notwithstanding, therefore, repentance and good works are required under the new covenant, it is still a covenant of *grace*; and the benefits of this covenant must still be accounted a *gift*, the freedom of which is not destroyed, or in the least diminished, by the restriction under which it is offered.

Nor do the means, by which our justification was effected, in any respect alter its nature as a gift, or in the least diminish its freedom. What these means are, the Apostle declares in the words immediately following; "Being justified freely by his grace, *through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ*:" and what we are to understand by this *redemption*, he tells us in another place; where, speaking of Christ, he assures us, that in him "we have redemption through his blood, *the forgiveness*"

“ *giveness of sins* °.” Under the Gospel-dispensation, as under the Legal, a shedding of blood was appointed in order to remission; and this blood was no other than that of Christ himself; which, as the Priest of his Church, he offered to God, and thus made an atonement for us, and procured that absolution from the guilt of sin, without which we could not have been *justified*, or accepted and treated as righteous persons. And hence it is that we are said to be “ justified through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.” But this redemption was not procured by us, or provided at our expence. It was the result of the pure love of God; who, compassionating our misery, himself provided the means of our deliverance. And for this cause he sent into the world his only-begotten son, who voluntarily submitted to die upon the cross, that he might become the propitiation for our sins, and reconcile us to God. Thus is the whole an entire act of mercy on the part of God and Christ; begun and completed for our benefit, but without our intervention: and therefore, with respect to us, the pardon of sin, and our consequent justification, must still be ac-

° Eph. i. 7.

counted a gift, notwithstanding it comes to us "through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ."

And thus the doctrine of Atonement is so far from infringing, that it rather illustrates and displays the free grace and goodness of God: consequently the objection which we have now been considering, not only will not bear the great stress which has been laid upon it, but is even wholly unfounded, and falls entirely to the ground.

The foregoing objection proceeds upon the supposition that the doctrine of Atonement is inconsistent with the positive declarations of Scripture. There are other objections, which are rather of a negative kind: being founded upon the entire omission of this doctrine in the Old Testament; and upon the profound silence, observed in the New by our Lord and his Apostles, upon occasions which apparently required them to treat of it with the greatest openness and freedom.

And, in the first place, with respect to the Old Testament it is asserted, that, "if the doctrine of Atonement be true, it cannot, however, be pretended that David, or any other pious person" mentioned in that book,

book, " was at all acquainted with it." And from this position it is inferred, either that " the belief of this doctrine cannot be necessary to salvation, or indeed of much consequence:" or, secondly, admitting the importance of the doctrine, that " the whole of " the Old Testament is, throughout, a most " unaccountable book, and the religion it " exhibits, defective in the most essential article^p." Now the truth of the position itself may justly be called in question. For the Old Testament contains many indubitable notices of this doctrine. A Saviour to come was expressly promised, and plainly foretold: and the method of the salvation was signified and represented by the institutions and ceremonial observances of the law. Though, therefore, the holy men of old had not that clear light which we under the Gospel enjoy, they were not wholly in the dark: they, doubtless, many of them, saw enough to convince them that their carnal ordinances had a spiritual meaning, and were not utterly unable to look through the sign to the thing signified by it.

But even admitting that the pious persons,

^p Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 157, 158.

mentioned in the Old Testament, were wholly unacquainted with this doctrine, still we must not hastily infer, either that the doctrine is unnecessary, or that the Old Testament is defective. And first, it does not follow that the doctrine is unnecessary. We know that the revelation of Divine truth was not full and entire at once: its dawnings, in early times, were faint and obscure: as the world advanced, it gradually grew more clear and distinct; till at length it burst forth into a perfect day, at the appearance of him who is emphatically called *the light of the world*^a. Now if the revelation of the Divine will has been thus gradual; if, under the Old Testament, it was only begun, and was not completed but by the preaching of Christ and his inspired Apostles; then must they, who lived before the times of the Gospel, of necessity have been unacquainted with many important truths. But let us not absurdly suppose that their ignorance can be any excuse for our unbelief, or, because a doctrine could not be believed before it was revealed, that therefore the belief of it, when revealed, is a matter of little consequence.

^a John viii. 12.

Let

Let us attend to the force of this argument, when applied to that doctrine which, in the estimation of our Opponent, is of the greatest importance, as being the distinguishing doctrine of Christianity; I mean a resurrection to immortal life. Now it is most certain that this doctrine was not fully revealed before the coming of Christ. This our Opponent in effect acknowledges, when he asserts, that “the true and proper design of the Gospel, “and consequently of the preaching and of “the death of Christ, was to ascertain and “exemplify the great doctrines of a resurrection and of a future state.” And indeed it would be difficult, perhaps it is impossible to produce from the Old Testament any passage, in which these doctrines are explicitly and undeniably asserted. And therefore, if known at all, of which some have doubted, they must have been very imperfectly known to the holy men of old. But if their ignorance does not lessen the importance of these doctrines, (and what Christian will contend that it does?) surely it cannot more affect the doctrine of Atonement; the belief of which, even allowing it to have been un-

* Hist. of Cor. p. 175.

known

known to the antient people of God, is not, on this account, a matter of little consequence, or become in any respect the less necessary to salvation.

After what has been already said, few words will suffice to shew the weakness of the other inference, viz. that, admitting the truth and importance of this doctrine, "the whole of the Old Testament is, throughout, a most unaccountable book, and the religion it exhibits is defective in the most essential article." For the very circumstance which, in the opinion of this Author, renders the Old Testament a most unaccountable book, is the necessary consequence of the method by which the will of God has been revealed to mankind. It is not for us to enquire, why God concealed from one age of the world, what he afterwards thought fit to make known. Doubtless each distinct revelation was adequate to the purpose for which it was given, and is therefore perfect in its kind. At all events the omission, or imperfect revelation, of the doctrine of Atonement, can no more be called a defect in the Old Testament, than the omission, or imperfect revelation, of a resurrection and a future state. And we piously believe that the ignorance of the antient

tient Israelites, respecting either doctrine, will be no hindrance to their enjoying the benefit of both: that in Christ Jesus, and in consequence of what he hath done, and suffered for mankind, their bodies will, with ours, be raised at the last day; and that such among them as, agreeably to the light afforded them, sincerely endeavoured to serve God, and to work righteousness, will be accepted of him.

But it is further objected, that “ the Jews, “ in our Saviour’s time, had no idea of this “ doctrine; for if they had, they would have “ expected a suffering, and not a triumphant “ Messiah.” And that their ignorance was not owing to any mistake respecting the character of the Messiah, and the true end of his coming into the world, is presently after attempted to be proved from the silence of our Saviour; who never, in the course of his preaching, pointed out to them their error, or drew their attention to the supposed great and only true cause of his death*.

This argument of our Opponent, like the former, may fairly be turned upon himself; against whom it proves at least as much as

* Hist. of Cor. p. 158.

* Ibid. p. 159.

against us. The Jews, we are told, in our Saviour's time, had no idea that Messiah was to die for the sins of the world. But had they any more an idea that the true and proper end of his mission and death was "to exemplify and ascertain the doctrines of a resurrection and a future state?" It will not be pretended. One great and powerful sect among them disowned the very notion of a resurrection; and they all agreed in ascribing for Messiah's appearance a very different cause. They expected from his conquering arm the subjugation of their temporal enemies, and the possession of earthly power and grandeur. Even his own Disciples had no other expectation from him. Hence the rebuke of Peter, when he spake of the cruel mockings, and the ignominious death, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem. "Be it far from thee, Lord; this shall not be unto thee^u:" as if he thought it unbecoming the great Redeemer of God's people to submit to such indignity. And afterwards, having seen him, agreeably to his own predictions, betrayed and put to death, they seem to have given up all hope and expectation

^u Matt. xvi. 22.

from him. "We trusted," say they, we once fondly hoped "that it had been he "which should have redeemed Israel". And so deeply rooted was this prejudice of theirs in expecting a triumphant, and not a suffering Messiah, that our Lord on this account accuses them of folly, and slowness of heart to believe what the prophets had spoken. "Ought not," says he, "Christ "to have suffered these things, and to enter "into his glory?" As to the doctrine of a resurrection, they had not the least conception that it was at all connected with his mission and death. For, notwithstanding he concludes the account of his sufferings and crucifixion with an assurance that the third day he should rise again, the Evangelist tells us, that "they understood none of these "things: and this saying was hid from them, "neither knew they the things which were "spoken". And again, when, immediately after his transfiguration, he charged Peter, and James, and John, to tell no man what they had seen in the mount, till the son of man were risen from the dead; "they

* Luke xxiv. 21.

* Luke. xxiv. 25, 26.

† Luke xviii. 34.

“ kept,” says St. Mark, “ that saying with
 “ themselves, questioning one with another
 “ what the rising from the dead should
 “ mean.” And, so far were they from ex-
 pecting that such an event would happen, in
 consequence of the predictions of the pro-
 phets, that, even after it had taken place,
 St. John tells us, “ as yet they knew not
 “ the Scripture, that he must rise again from
 “ the dead.” And after they were fully
 convinced of the reality of this event, they
 were so far from considering his resurrection
as a pledge and a proof of their own, that they
 thought it merely preparatory to his appear-
 ing in what they esteemed his proper charac-
 ter; “ Lord,” say they, “ wilt thou at this
 “ time restore again the kingdom to Israel^b?”
 But, notwithstanding, in thus expecting a tri-
 umphant Messiah and a temporal Deliverer,
 they had unquestionably mistaken Messiah’s
 character, and were wholly ignorant of what
 our Historian esteems the only true end of his
 mission, our Lord no where reproves them for
 their error, or sets them right in a matter of
 so great importance. To his own Disciples
 he says nothing of his sufferings, till after

^a Mark ix. 10.^a John xx. 9.^b Acts i. 6.

they

they had owned him to be the Christ*. Even after his resurrection, when they enquired of him, whether he would at that time accomplish what they still erroneously imagined to be the sole end of Messiah's appearance, he does not yet undeceive them: he eludes the question, by saying, "It is not for you to know the times or the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power^d," promising them at the same time the gift of the Holy Ghost, who, by his Divine agency, should fully illuminate their understandings, and lead them into all truth. It appears, then, that this objection, if allowed to be valid against our doctrine, would be no less fatal to the opinion of our Adversary: for the Jews in general, and our Lord's Disciples among the rest, were as ignorant of the latter as of the former; and were suffered to continue in ignorance till the time came for the full discovery of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

But we are told that our Lord not only does not rectify the mistake of the Jews, and

* Matt. xvi. 21. Mark viii. 31. Luke ix. 22.

^d Acts i. 7.

explain to them the supposed true and only great cause of his death, but also that he keeps a profound silence upon this subject in the general course of his preaching, and in his conversations with his Disciples, both before and after his resurrection: and further, that his Apostles observe the same silence in all their addresses and discourses, recorded in the history of their Acts*.

Here, again, the argument may with equal force be turned against our Adversary. For neither does our Lord, in any of his conversations with his Disciples, press upon them the necessity of his own death, in order that, by rising again, he may give a proof and example of a resurrection from the dead; nor do his Apostles, in any of the places alleged, insist upon this as the great and only true cause of his mission. They indeed frequently appeal to his resurrection; but, as will presently appear, it is for the most part with a different view.

But I wish not to dwell any longer upon this point; I would rather enquire whether a satisfactory reason may not be assigned for that silence, which is thus urged as an objection to our doctrine.

* Hist. of Cor. p. 161.

That there were many subjects upon which our Lord did not think fit to open himself, even to his immediate followers, while he was upon earth, he himself acknowledges, assigning at the same time the reason of his reserve. “ I have yet,” says he, “ many things to say unto you ; but ye cannot bear them now^f.” Men cannot bear that the whole truth should break in upon them at once ; but must be gradually prepared for its reception. It is with the spiritual, as with the natural man : we are not in a state of infancy able to bear that strong nourishment which is proper and even necessary for us, at a maturer age : so there are mysteries belonging to the kingdom of God, which ought not to be unfolded, except to those who are come unto a perfect man, “ unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ^g.” St. Paul speaks of his Corinthian converts as in a state of childhood ; and declares, that he had been obliged to speak unto them as unto babes in Christ, and to feed them with milk, and not with meat ; for, says he, “ hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able^h.”

^f John xvi. 12.

^g Eph. iv. 13.

^h 1 Cor. iii. 2.

The work of conversion and instruction is an arduous work, requiring the greatest prudence and caution. The ground must first be cleared, and the foundation properly laid, before the building can be raised. In like manner the mind must be freed from antient prejudices, and be rightly instructed in the principles of the doctrine of Christ, before it can attain unto a perfect knowledge of the Gospel. Our blessed Saviour well knew the temper of those with whom he had to do; and what mode of conduct was most likely to prevail. His countrymen, to whom he principally addressed himself, entertained, as we have seen, false notions of Messiah's character; and their prejudices were so deeply rooted, that nothing short of Divine authority seemed capable of removing them. Accordingly our Lord does not, immediately and at once, oppose to these prejudices the real nature of his mission, by declaring, in express terms, the true end of his coming into the world: his aim is rather, in the first place, to convince them of the Divine authority with which he acted; and to gain their attention to his doctrine, by performing among them such mighty works, as they must themselves acknowledge

knowledge no one could perform, except God were with him. If, at his first appearance, he had, without any preparation, publicly declared the true end and design of his mission, he would have given universal offence to that prejudiced people; who, instead of hearing him gladly, would with one consent have combined against him, as an enemy to their nation, and a blasphemer of their God, without attending to, or perhaps giving him an opportunity of exhibiting, those proofs of his mission to which he appealed. We therefore find him, at his first appearance, scrupulously endeavouring to conceal from the people his real character. The Devils, who knew him, he suffered not to speak¹: and after his immediate followers had confessed him to be the Christ, “ he straitly charged them, and commanded them to tell no man that thing*.” The world in general was not as yet prepared to receive this great truth; the public declaration of which was reserved for the Apostles, who, after the resurrection of their Lord, were to be his witnesses to the people. At present, therefore, the knowledge of the Saviour was confined

¹ Mark i. 34.^{*} Luke ix. 21.

to these chosen Disciples; and our Lord's more immediate care was to prepare them for the work to which they were called. But even to them he does not reveal himself openly, and at once; but leaves them, under the influence of the holy Spirit, to draw their own conclusion from what they saw and heard. And when at length their conviction drew from them the general confession above-mentioned, that he was "the Christ of God," he suffers them still to remain in ignorance of the true end of his mission: nor was it till after his ascension into heaven, that their minds were fully illuminated with the knowledge of Divine truth.

Such was the prudence and caution observed by our Lord, in revealing to his immediate followers the truths of the Gospel. And the same prudential conduct they, in their turn, observed, in delivering to others the things which they had received. While our Lord was upon earth, his doctrine and miracles had so far attracted the notice of the people; as to excite in them some expectation of his being the great Deliverer, predicted by the prophets. But, ignorant of Messiah's real character, and big with the hope of worldly power and grandeur, they were impatient

patient at the disappointment of their aspiring views, and turned with disgust and abhorrence from a crucified Saviour. To the Gentiles, also, the doctrine of the Cross appeared no less unreasonable; and could not fail of exposing the preachers of it to their contempt and ridicule. Thus the preaching of Christ crucified was "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness;" and proved among both, the greatest impediment to the progress of the Gospel. It was therefore the first and immediate care of the instructors of mankind, to remove this impediment, and to convince both Jews and Greeks, that the crucified Jesus was, notwithstanding his ignominious death, both Lord and Christ; a Prince and a Saviour; the proper object of their faith, and the firm foundation of their hope. And as Jesus himself had formerly appealed to his miracles in testimony of his Divine mission; so they, in confirmation of their doctrine, insisted upon that greatest of miracles, his resurrection from the dead; which they every where held forth, not simply as the proof and pledge of our own, but rather as a most convincing argument that he is very Christ, advanced to the highest state of power and glory,
and

and ordained to be the judge of quick and dead¹.

In this general manner did the Apostles preach the Gospel to the unconverted: and of those whom they convinced by their preaching, they required no other confession than simply this; that *Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God*: for their faith in this fundamental doctrine being fully established, they would be disposed to lay aside their former prejudices, and to receive, with meekness and

¹ See St. Peter's discourse to the *Jews* immediately after the descent of the Holy Spirit, Acts ii; and again in the temple upon the cure of the impotent man, ch. iii; and to Cornelius, and the other *Gentiles* assembled with him, ch. x. See also St. Paul's discourse to the *Jews* at Antioch, ch. xiii; and at Theſſalonica, ch. xvii. These all are among the places referred to by Dr. Priestley. The other places to which he refers are the following: The speech of Stephen at his trial, ch. vii; the discourse of Philip the Evangelist to the Eunuch, ch. viii; St. Paul's discourse to the *Heathens* at Lyſtra, ch. xiv. and at Athens, ch. xvii; before Agrippa, ch. xxvi. and at Rome, ch. xxviii. But on no one of these occasions does the speaker profess to treat of the doctrine of Atonement, or of a resurrection and a future state, or of any of the peculiar doctrines of Christianity: his design is rather to apologize for his own conduct; or to convert and bring over either the idolatrous Heathens to the worship of the true God, or the unbelieving Jews to a general confession of faith in Christ.

submission,

submission, those other Divine truths, in which they should afterwards be instructed. So that the silence of our Lord in his conversations with his Disciples, and of these Disciples in their subsequent addresses to the unconverted, with respect to the doctrine of Atonement, appears to have proceeded from prudence and design; and to have been the necessary consequence of that mode of instruction, by which the truths of the Gospel were originally communicated. The teachers of religion were reserved only where reserve was expedient, and tended to the furtherance of the Gospel: on other occasions they opened themselves more freely. Even John the Baptist, after he had prepared his Disciples to receive our Lord as the promised Messiah, pointed him out to them under the character of “the lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world^m.” And our Lord himself at the institution of the Eucharist, when now his Disciples had fully acknowledged him to be the Messiah, and their faith in him as such, was confirmed beyond danger of being shaken, speaks of his blood as being “shed for the remission of sinsⁿ.”

^m John i. 29, 36.

ⁿ Matt. xxvi. 28.

And

And in the Acts of the Apostles, that book, in which we are triumphantly told that not a word is dropped by any of the Apostles respecting this doctrine; in that very book St. Paul exhorts the Ephesian *Bishops* to “ feed the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” And in his epistles to the several Christian Churches whom he addresses, he shuns not to declare unto them the whole counsel of God; but insists (as do also the other Apostles) with no less freedom and fulness upon this, than upon any other undisputed doctrine of the Christian faith.

It appears, then, that the occasions referred to by our Historian, were so far, as is pretended, from affording to our Lord and his Apostles an opportunity of discoursing, with openness and freedom, upon the doctrine of Atonement, that they rather required that silence and reserve upon which the objection is founded. Consequently this objection, like the others before considered, is without force, and falls to the ground.

We have now considered the principal of those arguments, by which the Historian of

• Acts xx. 28.

the

the Corruptions of Christianity has thought fit to assail the doctrine in question. And I trust it must have appeared that nothing advanced by him is any real objection; much less of weight sufficient to justify the rejection of the plain and obvious sense of those numerous passages of Scripture, by which the doctrine is supported, in order to make room for that remote and figurative sense, for which he contends. And since the doctrine of Atonement is thus agreeable to the plain, untortured sense of Scripture in a variety of passages, and is no where irreconcilable with the language of the sacred writers; since it is perfectly consistent with the other acknowledged doctrines of our religion, and is in common with them freely insisted upon by the inspired penmen, whenever they judge it suitable to the occasion, and for the advantage of those to whom they addressed themselves; what shall hinder us from concluding, that it is part of that "faith which was once delivered unto the Saints?" Indeed, were the objections against it much more serious than we have found them to be, a doctrine, confessedly of

such importance, ought not easily to be resigned. But when in reality these objections are weak and frivolous, founded for the most part upon misconception and mistake, and at best are specious rather than solid; with how much greater confidence shall we preserve and keep it? To the followers of a vain and sceptical philosophy, conceited of their own knowledge, and trusting in their own righteousness, the doctrine, for which we contend, may appear, as it did to the Greeks of old, mere foolishness. But to the humble Christian, who takes the Scriptures for his guide, it is a doctrine full of comfort, and of hope. Sensible of the insufficiency of mere human virtue, he disowns all confidence in himself; and looks for acceptance, not on account of his own righteousness, but for the sake and through the mediation of Jesus Christ, who “suffered for sins, the just for “the unjust, that he might bring us to “God.”

1 Pet. iii. 18.

SERMON

S E R M O N VIII.

Rom. iii. 25, 26.

Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus.

IT is the peculiar excellency of the Christian religion, that its doctrines are addressed not to the understanding merely, but to the heart also; and are all of them eminently calculated to affect the lives of Believers, and to promote the practice of piety and virtue. This is the acknowledged tendency of all the undoubted articles of our most holy faith; nor can any opinion, which

has been generally received as a Christian doctrine, be more effectually degraded from its assumed rank, than by shewing that it tends rather to produce the opposite effect.

Upon this ground the doctrine of Atonement has been attacked and impeached. For while, on the one hand, the advocates of this doctrine affirm with confidence, that it has a most powerful influence upon the practice of all who sincerely receive it; its opponents, on the other, no less confidently deny that it has any such influence: they rather insinuate that it has a pernicious tendency; being, according to their representation, so contrived as to give the minds of men "unfavourable impressions of the Divine government, which, if not corrected by something else, must," we are told, "have an unfriendly aspect upon their virtue."

It is not my design to enter upon a regular examination of the arguments adduced in proof of that pernicious influence, which is thus ascribed to our doctrine. I shall only observe, that they proceed principally upon the supposition that it represents the Deity in a vindictive point of view, requiring full and adequate satisfaction to his offended justice, and withholding mercy even from sincere penitents, till such satisfaction be made.

Now

Now it is insinuated^a, that, according to such a doctrine, God's moral government is founded upon a blind principle, whose only end is to obtain satisfaction for itself, which, when provoked, it craves indiscriminately of all that come within its reach, or that throw themselves in its way. But in opposition to such a blind principle of government, and such an unworthy end, our Author contends, that in the Deity *goodness* or *benevolence* (of which *justice* is asserted to be a mere modification) is the *sole* governing principle; and that its *only* object and end is the supreme happiness of God's creatures and subjects. Having thus stated that in God's moral government, the sole principle is goodness, and the sole end, the happiness of his creatures, he proceeds to argue, that whatever has not a tendency to promote the *end*, must be inconsistent with the *principle*: that in the all-perfect government of God, this end is not promoted by any severity shewn to *penitents* themselves; that therefore to exercise severity upon them is unnecessary; and to exercise it upon others, as the doctrine of Atonement requires, is absurd. And this is the ground

^a Hist. of Cor. v. i. p. 168.

upon which the doctrine of Atonement is asserted to give the minds of men those unfavourable impressions of the Divine government, by which, if uncorrected, their virtue would be endangered.

In order to shew the weakness and irrelevancy of this whole argument, I need only briefly repeat what I have already discoursed upon at large. It has been shewn, that atonement means simply *reconciliation*; and therefore does not necessarily imply any satisfaction at all: consequently the doctrine, considered generally, cannot be affected by an argument, the very basis of which is *satisfaction to Divine justice*. It has been further shewn, that of those who assert a satisfaction to Divine justice, the greater part mean not such a rigid satisfaction as an offended person might be supposed to claim as a matter of right, and by way of compensation; but such as a prudent governor, anxiously concerned for the welfare of his subjects, might think fit to require, in order to maintain a respect for his laws, and to preserve his authority from contempt. But the argument of our Historian proceeds upon the supposition of an *adequate* satisfaction, claimed by the Almighty Governor of the universe, solely upon his own account;

count; and is therefore wholly inapplicable to the doctrine of Atonement, considered under this view. Lastly, it has been shewn, that even they who understand *satisfaction* in its most rigid sense, still suppose that it was required in order to maintain the inviolability of the Divine attributes, that God might be merciful without prejudice to his justice. But from this opinion, it by no means follows, that satisfaction was blindly or vindictively demanded; on the contrary, we should rather infer, that the appointment of it proceeded from the Divine goodness or benevolence. So that under no view of our doctrine is there the least reason for asserting, that its Advocates intend any opposition between the justice of God and his goodness; or that they mean to set up a principle of government, which has not for its object the happiness of God's creatures. Thus this whole argument proceeds upon a misconception, and a false view of the subject: and the foundation being thus sandy and weak, the superstructure cannot but fall.

But while I thus contend, that nothing in the doctrine of Atonement, under any view of it, is really inconsistent with what is here proposed as the principle of God's moral government,

vernment, and the end which it has in view ; let me not be thought implicitly to subscribe to the proposition itself in its full extent. For if I understand it right, it in effect maintains, that the supreme happiness of God's creatures is the *sole* end of all the measures of his government, and consequently that any measure, of which this happiness is not the primary and immediate object, cannot consist with his governing principle. Now that the measures of God's government have all of them, through his goodness, a general tendency to promote the good of his creatures, I readily allow : but that the good of his creatures must be the *sole*, or indeed the *great* and *primary* end of every measure, I am not prepared to admit. The Scriptures seem to speak a different language : they affirm, that *the glory of God* is the great end of creation itself ; and that the promotion of his glory is the thing principally intended by the whole course and order of the universe. " For of
 " him, and through him, and to him, are all
 " things : to whom be glory for ever^b."
 " Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory,
 " and honour, and power : for thou hast

^b Rom. xi. 36.

" created

“ created all things, and for thy pleasure
 “ they are, and were created :” Though
 therefore we should fail in shewing that any
 dispensation was immediately designed to pro-
 mote our own happiness, still it would by no
 means follow that the dispensation itself is
 inconsistent with the general design of God’s
 providence. Far be it from us to suppose that
 always our good, and never his own glory,
 ought to be the immediate object of the mea-
 sures of his government. There may be in
 the nature of God somewhat so adverse to
 sin, as to require the appointment of a propi-
 tiation. It may be that the glory of his at-
 tributes, of his justice in particular, may be
 concerned in such an appointment : at least
 we cannot know to the contrary : and there-
 fore it is not for us to reject a propitiation on
 account of its supposed inconsistency, with
 what we may (ignorantly perhaps) assume as
 the fundamental principle of God’s govern-
 ment.

But in the present case there is no such
 inconsistency. For whatever might be the
 primary intention of a propitiation for sin,
 considered generally, we scruple not to affirm,

Rev. iv. 11.

P 4

that

that the propitiation appointed for the sin of man, had in view the good of man: which, as I conceive, it effectually promotes, not only by procuring our deliverance from the punishment of sin, and our restoration to the favour of God; but also by its influence upon our conduct, derived from that manifestation of the righteousness or justice of God, which is expressly ascribed to it by the Apostle in the text: a manifestation, calculated to fill the mind with such awful apprehensions of the Divine Being, as must have a direct tendency to promote repentance, and the practice of virtue. In the ensuing Discourse I propose to elucidate the Apostle's meaning, and to fix the true sense of the words before us, that we may be able to apply them with advantage to our present argument: and I the more readily close my labour with an illustration of this important passage, because I conceive it affords a strong confirmation of the whole doctrine for which we have been contending.

In the chapter before us, the Apostle is treating of man's justification in the sight of God; of which he proposes two methods: the first is by our own obedience to the Di-

vine

vine law; the works of which "if a man do, he shall live in them." This obedience he elsewhere calls "the righteousness which is of the law;" and since, if it could be attained, it would proceed from the exertion of those powers and faculties which God hath implanted in our nature, it is also called *our own* righteousness. The other method of justification is by the grace of God, absolving us from the guilt of sin, and not imputing our iniquities unto us. And because this non-imputation of sin, for which we are thus indebted to the free grace and goodness of God, hath, as far as our acceptance is concerned, the effect of actual righteousness, it is denominated, in opposition to the former, "the righteousness of God." And, because we apply the benefit of it to ourselves *by faith*, or a firm persuasion of the promises of God, and a steadfast reliance upon his goodness, it is further called "the righteousness of God by faith."

Of these methods of justification, the former is rejected by the Apostle, as inapplicable to man in his present state of degeneracy and imperfection; since he neither does nor can

" Lev. xviii. 5. Rom. x. 5. Ib. 3. 9 "

pay that strict and entire obedience to the Divine law, which is required of all who seek in this manner to be accepted of God.

“ By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified; for by the law is the knowledge of sin.” It remains, therefore, that we

have recourse to the other method, which is better adapted to the present condition of man. “ For,” says the Apostle, “ all have

“ sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace.”

And this justification the Apostle further declares proceeds to us, not immediately from God, but by the intervention of a Saviour.

“ Being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ.”

Having thus laid the foundation of our acceptance in the mere grace and goodness of God, and declared the means by which it pleased

God to carry into effect his gracious designs towards mankind, the Apostle proceeds, in the words of the text, to state, that this Jesus, in

whom we have redemption, “ God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in

“ his blood :” “ whom God hath set forth,”

ὃν προσέθετο ὁ θεός; whom God proposed, openly exhibited, or publicly announced “ to be a

“ propitiation,” to be the person in whom he

is

is reconciled to sinful man, and through whom he will accept as righteous all who by faith apply to themselves the virtue of that blood which was shed for the remission of sins ².

The

² It has been observed, that the word here rendered *propitiation*, in the original *ἱλαστήριον*, is the same which is used in the Septuagint version, and also by the Apostle himself in his Epistle to the Hebrews (ch. ix. 5.) to express *the mercy-seat*, that outward covering of the ark, above which, in the old tabernacle, God displayed his visible presence to the Israelites. Hence some Commentators have contended, that it ought to have the same meaning in the passage before us; which accordingly they render "whom God hath set forth to be a *propitiatory* or *mercy-seat*." The *mercy-seat* was so called, because, under the Old Testament, it was the place where the High-Priest, on the feast of expiation, sprinkled the blood of the sin-offerings, in order to make an atonement for himself and the whole congregation: and since God accepted the offering which was there made, it may for this reason be accounted the medium, through which God shewed himself propitious to his chosen people. With reference to this, Jesus Christ may be called a *mercy-seat*, as being the person, in or through whom God shews himself propitious to mankind. And as, under the Old Testament, God was propitious to those who came unto him, by appearing before his *mercy-seat* with the blood of their sin-offerings; so, under the Gospel-dispensation, he is propitious to those who come unto him by Jesus Christ, through faith in that blood (elsewhere called the blood of sprinkling) which he shed for the remission

The intention, or design, with which God was pleased thus to set forth, or openly to exhibit his blood, for the remission of sins. (See Whitby's annotation on this passage.)

But an objection may be taken against this interpretation, upon the ground that it gives to the word *ιλαστηριον* a mere declarative sense, making the Saviour entirely passive in effecting a propitiation; and assigning to him no higher office than that of bearing testimony to God's intentions towards mankind, or of declaring that the effect has been produced. Whereas the context, and full force of the passage, seem to require that the word should be taken actively; so as to ascribe to the Saviour an agency in propitiating God. Accordingly it has been contended, that the word should be rendered (agreeably to our own version) *propitiation*; so that by *ιλαστηριον* in this place, St. Paul is affirmed to mean that very thing which St. John expresses by *ιλασμος*; which latter word never signifies a *propitiatory*, or that by means of which God shews himself propitious; but a propitiation, or that on account of which he is become propitious; (see Grotius de Satisfac. chap. vii.) and then the following words, "through faith in his blood," serve to declare both the means by which the propitiation was effected, viz. by the blood of Christ shed for our sins, and also the manner in which we are to apply the benefit of the propitiation to ourselves, viz. by faith in the virtue and efficacy of that blood which was shed.

There is yet another interpretation, of which the word *ιλαστηριον* is capable: for (being deduced from *ιλαστικός*) it may signify a *propitiator*, or the person by whom God is rendered propitious. (vid. Beza Annotat.) Taking the word

bit the Redeemer as a propitiation, the Apostle subjoins in the words immediately following :
 “ to declare his righteousness for the re-
 “ mission of sins that are past, through the
 “ forbearance of God.” “ To declare his

word in this sense, we have here ascribed to Christ the same office which the High Priest discharged, under the Old Testament, on the feast of expiation ; that of propitiating God by an offering of blood ; which blood, under the New Testament, is that of Christ himself, with which he entered, not, as the legal High Priest with the blood of bulls and of goats, into the Tabernacle made with hands, but into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us, that all who believe in him may, by virtue of that blood which he offered, obtain pardon of sins, and acceptance in the sight of God. And this third interpretation, while it is free from the objection urged against the first, in as much as it ascribes to Christ an agency in producing the effect, and not a mere power of declaring that the effect is produced, does not, like the second, take exactly in the same sense two words which have indeed the same origin, but whose difference of termination seems to require some distinction in meaning.

But, in which ever of these senses we take the word in question, whether as a propitiatory, a propitiation, or a propitiator ; whether as the medium through which God has declared himself propitious ; as the thing on account of which he is become propitious ; or as the agent by whom he is made propitious ; it cannot, I think, be denied, that the passage before us ascribes to the blood of Christ a power of making propitiation, the effect of which we are to apply to ourselves by faith.

“ righteousness,”

“righteousness,” εἰς ἐνδειξιν τῆς δικαιοσύνης αὐτοῦ, for a *demonstration*, or rather, *manifestation* of his *righteousness* or *justice*. Justice, when applied to the Divine nature, is that attribute by which God, considered as the governor of the universe, wills the punishment of those who transgress his laws. Consequently by God’s demonstrating or manifesting his justice, we may understand his taking such measures as prove to all the subjects of his government the entire rectitude of his nature, and his invariable adherence to this essential branch of his character. Now the setting forth of Jesus Christ to be a propitiation was a measure of this kind, ordained by the all-wise Governor of the universe, to convince the world that he is a righteous judge, abhorring sin, and whatever appearances there may be to the contrary, entertaining a just severity against it. I say, whatever appearances there may be to the contrary: for that there were such appearances in the world, at the time of our Saviour’s advent, the Apostle himself testifies in the words immediately following: διὰ τὴν παρέσιν τῶν προγεγονότων ἁμαρτημάτων; which our Translators have rendered “for the remission of sins that are past:” but which, perhaps,

perhaps, may more accurately be rendered, agreeably to the reading of the margin, "for," that is, on account of, "the passing over of sins "that are past," or rather "sins which had "been committed before;" viz. before the time when God thought fit to give to mankind this manifestation of his justice. It is most certain, that in preceding times, before the coming of Christ, God had passed over sin, leaving it unpunished, or at least not punished as it deserved, and as his own threatenings, denounced frequently at the very time, and on the very occasion, seemed to require. I may instance in that sin, to which the redemption that is in Jesus Christ immediately refers, and in which we are all most nearly concerned; I mean, the sin of our first parents, in eating the forbidden fruit. Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God commanded him, saying, "Thou shalt not eat of it:" and against the breach of this command he denounced severest vengeance. "In the day "that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely "die^a." The wisdom and goodness of the lawgiver force us to acknowledge, that both the command and the penalty were wise

^a Gen. ii. 17.

and good : and his justice might teach us to expect that he threatened not in vain, but would most assuredly execute the sentence of the law upon the offender. But this was not the case : in the day that man sinned, he did not die : on the contrary, he was allowed a further time of trial ; and was left in the mean while not entirely void of comfort, or destitute of hope. He was indeed denied the enjoyment of an earthly paradise ; but he had before him the prospect of higher and more exalted bliss : and though, at the end of his day of trial, he was to quit this mortal state, yet his dissolution seems not so much the *punishment*, as simply the *effect* or *consequence* of his former sin ; and, with respect both to himself, and to his posterity, (who, being all partakers of his fallen nature, are with him subject to death) should rather be considered merely as a passage to another state of existence, in which, if they are not wanting to themselves in this, they may be happy to all eternity. Thus was the sin of the first man, against which the penalty of death had been positively threatened, at most only partially punished : and although, in after times, his posterity had been guilty of the grossest idolatry, and the most flagitious departures

partures from their duty ; yet God appears, in a variety of instances, to have winked at these enormities, and to have suffered men to proceed, after the imagination of their own vain heart, with impunity, and almost without notice.

This passing over of sin the Apostle most justly imputes to “ the forbearance of God ;” and, in itself considered, it is most unquestionably greatly to the praise of his mercy, and to the glory of his grace. But, on the other hand, it affords no manifestation of justice in the Deity ; and might therefore be the occasion of men’s entertaining false notions of God, injurious to his honour, and destructive of their own welfare. Justice, according to our natural conception, instead of suffering sin to remain unpunished, requires that vengeance be speedily executed against an evil work. But if this awful attribute were perpetually veiled from the sight of men ; if God continued to be silent when they committed sin, and suffered them to go on without reproof, sparing when they deserved punishment, and even heaping his benefits upon them ; might they not be tempted wickedly to suppose that he is altogether such an one as themselves ; that justice is no essential

part of his character; on the contrary, that he views sin, not with indifference merely, but with approbation; and not only disregards the actions of men, whether they be good or bad, but even takes pleasure in wickedness, and is not unwilling that evil should dwell with him? Or, if they proceeded not to such an height of impiety, might they not at least be led to build false hopes upon the mercy of God, which, they might imagine, would always triumph over justice, and not suffer him to reject the most daring and obstinate offenders? And thus, in either case, the forbearance of God, instead of leading men to repentance, would only harden their impenitent heart, and encourage them to greater degrees of violence and wickedness. And therefore God, that he might remove all occasion of so fatal an error, was pleased to send into the world his son Jesus Christ, in order to become the propitiation for our sins, and actually to make that reconciliation which had been ordained from the foundation of the world. And by thus publicly setting forth and openly avowing the method of justification appointed for sinners, he hath fully vindicated his own justice. For, being now assured that even the blood of the son of
God

God was not esteemed too high a price to redeem the forfeited souls of men, and to save them from the curse and condemnation of the law, can we for a moment entertain a thought injurious to the character of God; or impute his forbearance of punishment to any weakness or defect in his nature? Shall we not rather confess, that, notwithstanding his passing over of sin, he is still a righteous judge; still concerned for the honour of his law, and attentive to the actions of men?

Before the coming of Christ, a propitiation for sin was not indeed entirely unknown. But being only obscurely promised, and faintly typified by the legal atonements, it could not illustrate in any great degree the Divine justice: and therefore the Apostle adds, “to declare at *this time* his righteousness:” at this time; that is, now that Christ has appeared in the world. For whatever might be the case before; however the forbearance of God might hitherto have obscured his justice; yet after that Christ had actually appeared to pay the ransom, and to be the propitiation for sin, there was no longer any room for doubt. God could not now appear any otherwise than just, although he accepted, and treated as righteous, not those who, by a strict and entire

obedience to his law, possessed in themselves such an absolute righteousness, as gave them a positive claim to acceptance; but those who, though sinners in themselves, yet, by conforming to that gracious method of reconciliation which himself had appointed, possessed that other kind of righteousness, by which justification might be obtained; even the righteousness of God by faith: "to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus."

The text, thus explained, applies without difficulty to the subject before us, and affords a most convincing argument, that the doctrine of Atonement is a practical doctrine, calculated to affect the lives, and to influence the conduct, of all who sincerely receive it.

For, in the first place, the clear manifestation which this doctrine affords of the righteousness of God, is a most effectual call to repentance.

No one, who thinks at all, could possibly go on secure in sin, did he not allay his fears by some delusive hope, and encourage himself with a vain expectation of escaping, in the end, the due reward of his deeds. Among the

the methods of deceit which men thus practise upon themselves, there is none greater, or more frequent, than a dependance upon the Divine mercy. Upon this gracious attribute of the Almighty, all who prefer their sins to their duty, are apt presumptuously to rely; and would fain flatter themselves that it will screen them from vengeance in the day of wrath, and not suffer them to fall into final condemnation. But let all who thus deceive their own hearts, consider with attention the method of reconciliation which God himself hath ordained; and they will soon perceive, that *the setting forth of Jesus Christ to be a propitiation*, takes from the impenitent sinner every ground of presumptuous hope, and teaches him the vanity of flying for refuge to the mercy of God, from the terrors of his justice. For “if the righteous scarcely be “saved;” if they who sincerely obey the Gospel of God be redeemed from destruction at so dear a rate; “where shall the sinner and the “ungodly appear?” If the blood of the son of God were not accounted too high a price to save our souls from death, and to make even penitent believers objects of mercy; who can for a moment imagine that impenitent sinners will finally escape the judgment of God?

He is indeed, as he proclaimed himself to Moses, a "God merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth; keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." But he is also, as he proclaimed himself at the same time, a God "that will by no means clear the guilty." Although a God of mercy, he is still a righteous Judge; and hath demonstrated himself to be just, by the very method of justification which he hath appointed for mankind.

But, secondly, the effect of this doctrine is not confined to impenitent sinners. Such also, as willingly obey the Gospel of God, may be partakers of its salutary influence, and derive from it strength and support in the performance of their duty. For the setting forth of Jesus Christ to be a propitiation, while it demonstrates the justice of God, proclaims at the same time his abhorrence of sin, and tends to fill the mind with such awful apprehensions of his purity and holiness, as can hardly fail of exciting in us an habitual fear of offending him, and an earnest desire to "walk worthy of the Lord, unto all pleasing."

Exod. xxxiv, 6, 7.

And

And when we reflect, that, without shedding of blood, even the blood of the son of God, there was no remission, what a deep sense must we have of the evil of sin: and how must this consideration work upon us, to lament with godly sorrow the corruption of our nature, and the imperfection of our lives; to mortify our sinful lusts and affections; to watch over our conduct with care and circumspection; and, by patient continuance in well-doing, to approve ourselves to him who, by the very method of our reconciliation to himself, hath clearly manifested that he is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity.

Nor let it be imagined, as our Historian contends, that the doctrine of Atonement, admitting that it raises our ideas of the justice of God, must in the same proportion sink our ideas of his mercy *. The redemption of fallen man was, throughout, an act of mercy; and the method by which it was effected is so far from lowering in the least degree, that it raises this attribute to an astonishing height. That in our fallen state God should deign to look upon us, and, instead of rigidly inflicting the punishment due to our sin, should,

* Hist. of Cor. p. 170.

by the appointment of a propitiation, open a way to his favour, and again place within our reach life and happiness; that without desert on our part, and even without solicitation, he should freely provide the means of our reconciliation to himself, and even when we were enemies, should send his son to die for our sins—can there be conceived greater love than this? or can any doctrine more powerfully vindicate, or more highly advance the Divine mercy? And thus the doctrine of Atonement is so far (as it has been asserted) from losing on the one hand what it may seem to have gained on the other, that it may rather be said to gain on both. On the one hand, it demonstrates the justice of God; on the other, it displays his goodness, and exalts his mercy. And what additional motives are afforded, by this view of the doctrine, to the practice of piety and virtue! As well as to alarm the fears of the careless and unthinking, how admirably is it calculated to enliven the hopes of the humble and contrite; to confirm the faith of the weak and desponding; to inflame the love of the pious and devout; in a word, to put in motion, and give vigour to, all the springs and principles of action, and thus most powerfully to engage

engage men to the practice of holiness here, by which alone they can secure to themselves a life of happiness hereafter.

But I need not dwell upon a case so plain. Enough, I trust, has already been said, to shew that the doctrine of Atonement is calculated to affect the lives and to influence the conduct of Believers; and consequently, that we do not without just reason urge its influence upon practice, as a strong argument in its favour. And with this argument I beg leave to close my illustration and defence of this important doctrine; subjoining only, by way of conclusion, a few general observations.

The purpose of God, in the dispensation of grace and mercy, which this doctrine unfolds to our view, was to rescue man from that wrath and condemnation, to which, according to the tenor of the first covenant, his disobedience had exposed him; and to place life and immortality again within his reach. To carry into effect this gracious purpose, God vouchsafed to ordain a propitiation for man's offence; in consequence of which the sentence of death, pronounced by the Divine law, was reversed; and this present life, no longer

longer a state of innocence and enjoyment, was converted into a state of trial and preparation; in which man is called upon to repent and turn from sin, and, by a course of habitual and persevering holiness, to qualify and prepare himself for a life of eternal happiness in a future state. In the fulness of time it pleased God to send into the world his son Jesus Christ; who, having taken our nature upon him, condescended to die upon the cross for our sins, and thus actually to become that propitiation which had been ordained from the beginning. By the sanctifying influence of his blood he has consecrated and purified his whole church; so that all who believe in him, obtain remission of sins; are justified in the sight of God; are adopted into his family; and are permitted to approach his presence with the confidence of sons, sure of finding a favourable acceptance, together with such supplies of help and strength as will enable them to finish their course with joy, and finally to attain that crown of everlasting life, which is the end of their faith, and the object of their hope.

Thus, upon the reconciliation effected by the death of Christ, are founded all the mercies of this present life, and all our hopes of
happiness

happiness hereafter. And this view of things is, as we have seen, clearly agreeable to the plain sense of Scripture, and to the obvious intention of the sacred writers. Should any man still be unsatisfied; and ask the reason of these things? should he enquire, why the shedding of blood was required for the remission of sins? why a simple declaration of God's will to receive sinners, upon repentance, would not have been sufficient, without an atonement? I am free to confess my ignorance, and hesitate not to say, I cannot tell. But let us not hastily conclude, that therefore no atonement has been made. Our very ignorance is an argument of the folly and danger of such a conclusion. Many things, at present concealed from us, might, if known, clearly evince the propriety, the expediency, the necessity of an atonement. Its propriety and expediency are in some measure manifest, notwithstanding our present faint and circumscribed view, from the glorious display which it makes of the Divine attributes, of the justice, the mercy, the goodness of the Deity; and from the beneficial consequences which this display is calculated to produce in ourselves. And who can tell what there may be in the pure and holy nature

nature of God, which may make a propitiation even necessary? God is omnipotent: but it is no impeachment of his omnipotence to assert, that he cannot do what is either absolutely impossible, or inconsistent with his moral perfections. He cannot lie: he cannot deceive: it would be contrary to his nature to do so. And who will say that it is not equally contrary to his nature to pardon sin without a propitiation? This at least is certain, that we no where read of mercy shewn to fallen creatures, upon any other ground. For fallen man a propitiation was appointed; and he became an object of mercy. For fallen angels no propitiation appears to have been appointed; and they are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Why these things are so, since God has not been pleased to reveal, we do not presume to say, nor does it become us to enquire. It is not for us to penetrate the clouds and darkness which surround the throne of God. It rather becomes us humbly to acquiesce in the Divine appointments; and whatever difficulties arise, or objections occur, to resolve them all into the unsearchableness of that mysterious excellence, whose ways are not the ways of man. This
one

one consideration, duly attended to, will teach us the vanity of being wise above that which is written, and of leaning to our own understandings, in opposition to the revealed will of God. It will rather teach us to receive with becoming gratitude that gracious method of reconciliation which God hath ordained, and, having received it, to hold it fast with unshaken confidence.

And, that we may the more readily be induced to resist every effort of our adversaries to undermine our faith, let us weigh with attention the danger to which such are exposed as depart from it. The case of apostates is allowed to be desperate. "If any man draw back, my soul," says God, "shall have no pleasure in him¹." And it behoves us to consider well, whether, by rejecting the doctrine of Atonement, we do not in some measure incur the guilt of those who apostatize from the faith. "If," says the Apostle, "we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth;" that is, if, after we have embraced the doctrine of Christ, we again determine to reject and abandon it; "there remaineth no more

¹ Heb. x. 38.

“ sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful look-
“ ing for of judgment and fiery indigna-
“ tion, which shall devour the adversaries.
“ He that despised Moses’ law, died without
“ mercy, under two or three witnesses : of
“ how much sorer punishment, suppose ye,
“ shall he be thought worthy, who hath trod-
“ den under foot the son of God, and hath
“ counted the blood of the covenant, where-
“ with he was sanctified, an unholy thing,
“ and hath done despite unto the spirit of
“ his grace^m ?” Let it be remembered, that
this solemn denunciation of the Apostle is
immediately subjoined to his discourse upon
the Sacrifice and Priesthood of Christ, and
may therefore well be thought to be nearly
connected with it. And we may further ob-
serve, that he seems to place the great danger
of apostacy in the privation of a sufficient sa-
crifice for sin, to avert the wrath of God.
Now, though we do not absolutely tread
under foot the son of God, yet if we deprive
him of one of his essential characters ; though
we do not count his blood an unholy thing,
yet if we esteem it worthless, and deny its
atoning power, in what does our case essen-

^m Heb. x. 26—29.

tially differ from that of real apostates? Unclean and polluted with sin, we dare not appear before God. But where shall we wash and be clean, if not in the fountain of Christ's blood? He condescended to die for our sins; and upon his death we may build the surest hope of pardon and acceptance. But if we neglect so great salvation, what further sacrifice for sin remaineth to us? There can be no greater: there is no other. And if this be wanting to avert from us the Divine vengeance, what have we to expect but the judgment of an unreconciled God, and that fiery indignation which shall most assuredly devour the adversaries of the truth?

Take heed, therefore, lest ye fall into so fatal an error. But rather be persuaded to hold fast the profession of your faith without wavering; being assured that "he is faithful who promised." So shall ye not be "of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them who believe to the saving of the soul."

^a Heb. x. 23.

^o Heb. x. 39. —

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Heb. x. 23.